

Lewis Nichols

A SHORT
BUT
COMPREHENSIVE VIEW
OF THE
EVIDENCES
OF THE
MOSAIC and CHRISTIAN CODES;
WITH A REFUTATION
OF THE
CHIEF OBJECTIONS
OF
ANCIENT AND MODERN UNBELIEVERS.

CHAP. I. EVIDENCES OF THE MOSAIC LAW.

CHAP. II. EVIDENCES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

CHAP. III. AN EXAMINATION OF SEVERAL POINTS RELATIVE
TO THE EVIDENCES OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

CHAP. IV. THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL NOT AFFECTED BY THE
OPPOSITION OR CAVILS OF THE DEISTS, WHO ARE
CONVICTED OF PRIDE, IGNORANCE, PREJUDICE, FALSE
REASONING OR MISREPRESENTATION.

BY THE REV. EDWARD RYAN, D. D. K
AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF THE EFFECTS OF RELIGION ON MANKIND.

*Be always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope
that is in you.* 1 PETER, iii. 45.

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NOT only the clergy but many wise and good laymen lament the disregard to religion which prevails too generally among all orders of the people. Religion has been found so useful, and irreligion so destructive to individuals and communities, that the author has examined the sources of the latter, with the means of preventing it in the higher classes of society. Some zealous Christians ascribe irreligion to the wicked lives of men, who wish to argue themselves into a disbelief of what it is their interest to be false. But admitting that vicious men generally dislike and oppose that religion which threatens immorality; yet we are not to suppose, that every man who opposes it is vicious or immoral. Many who are moral from habit or constitution

Sources of
irreligion
among the
nobility
and gen-
try of
Ireland.

tution oppose it from ignorance of its evidences; nor can we be surpris'd at their ignorance of those evidences, if we consider the little pains usually taken in instructing youth in the evidences of Christianity. In the Irish schools, boys are taught little more religion than the Church Catechism; and undergraduates in the University are almost wholly employed in the study of the Classics and sciences. In the college of Dublin, candidates for orders are well instructed in theological knowledge; while men of the best fortunes and candidates for other professions, generally leave it (immediately after they have taken the first degree) as ignorant of religion as on the day of their admission. I allow that some few who study for other professions stay in the college for one or two years longer, and are required to attend lectures in divinity (*x*); but it can not be expected, that such men should interrupt their own studies or their pleasures, by carefully attending those lectures, when the penalty of not attending them does not

(*x*) The divinity lectures of the Catechist and of the tutors are wretchedly attended.

amount to one guinea a year. We may easily judge of the consequences of thus neglecting the religious education of men whose example has great influence on the conduct of others. Strangers to the proofs of religion are soon corrupted by the conversation of men who never examined those proofs, or by some modern works of genius and learning. They are staggered by the most trifling objections; and the little religion they brought with them from school or college is soon destroyed by ignorant and immoral companions, or by books which convey the poison of Deism agreeably, to minds unprepared to combat or refute them.

The source of Deism immediately suggests the means of preventing it; namely, the instruction of youth in the proofs of Christianity, both in schools and colleges, where alone they can be *compelled* to attend to instruction. Unless they learn those proofs while they are under masters or Tutors, it is probable that nineteen in twenty of them will for ever remain strangers to those proofs, and to the comforts of religion.

A scheme for preventing irreligion among the nobility and gentry of Ireland.

gion. In order to render this scheme effectual, the heads of our college should admit no boy who has not been instructed at school in the evidences of Christianity, and who is not as well acquainted with those evidences as with Horace or Homer. Boys might acquire this knowledge in two or three months; and could well spare that time in Ireland, where they are admitted into the University at too youthful an age. But the heads of colleges should not only require this knowledge from students at admission, but introduce into the college course some anti-deistical author (*y*), in the place of some book which they may judge less useful. They oblige men to study the classics and instruct them carefully in the rudiments of the sciences; but shamefully disregard the fundamentals of Christianity. They encourage an emulation in logics, mathematics, &c. by public examinations and præmiums; and why not do so in respect to religion, which is conducive to the temporal and eternal interests of men?

(*y*) Skelton's deism revealed, the minute philosopher, &c.
 &c. against the deists, &c,

The moral demonstration of which Christianity is capable, is not unworthy the attention of scholars and academicians; as it exercises the minds of youth, renders men rational and sincere Christians, and furnishes arguments to confute their opponents. In consequence of the scheme here proposed teachers themselves would acquire theological knowledge; and be as expert in arguments for the support of religion, as they are at present in the classics and in the rudiments of the sciences. Several who never enter colleges would learn at schools the proofs of Christianity; and in ten or fifteen years the medical profession, the bar, the senate and every part of the kingdom would abound with rational Christians: men who would think it but fair to read the defences as well as the assaults on religion. Most gentlemen have read Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume, Gibbon, &c.; but it is a melancholy truth that few have perused the answers to those authors, or have themselves sufficient theological information to detect the fallacy of their flimsiest objections. Religion would have little to apprehend from the writings of the deists, if the replies

plies were perused. But as few have either leisure or inclination to peruse those replies, and as the replies are voluminous and scattered; it is the duty of every man who regards religion, to encourage some work which briefly exposed the erroneous opinions and absurd arguments of the deists. A work of this kind read early would enable young men to detect the falshood of several deistical objections, preserve them unshaken by those which they were unprepared to refute; and fortify them against the conversation and writings of impious and immoral men, who produce false facts, false opinions and false arguments, which they pass on the ignorant as true, by their wit, sophistry or the embellishments of their style. The writings which should be employed in the execution of the scheme here proposed, ought to be clear, comprehensive, short and cheap. The proper book for schools should include in a small compass all the solid arguments in support of Christianity, which are dispersed in different authors; the proper book for college examinations should briefly expose the erroneous

oneous opinions and false arguments of the deists; and each of those books should be clear, and easily reducible to question and answer for the accommodation of teachers. Something of this kind is attempted in the following work; the first two chapters of which were intended for schools, the third and fourth for colleges; and the whole for all persons who want leisure or inclination to peruse many authors. This little work is perhaps in some degree fit to answer these ends; as it contains the substance of many writers who were far superior to the author in abilities: nor does he aspire to any credit but that of collecting with industry, condensing with tolerable clearness, and arranging with a moderate share of judgment, the scattered proofs of Christianity; and of briefly exposing the weakness, ignorance or unfairness of its opponents. To expose the Deists in these respects was the object of his fourth chapter; nor has he animadverted on them *any further* than was necessary for that purpose. The scheme here proposed for the advancement of religion can hardly fail of success;

as the execution of it depends on the bishops and university, whose duty requires them to see the rising generation instructed in the evidences of Christianity and prepared to encounter the objections of the Deists. It is also the duty as well as the interest of governors to support religion, which has ever been the most effectual means of rendering the governed virtuous and happy. The history of the effects of religion on mankind exhibits the many happy fruits actually produced by Christianity in all the nations which embraced it: and the author hopes he will be excused for often referring to this history; as there is no other historical work to which he could refer, for the many advantages produced by the Gospel.

As the following work professes to exhibit all the essential proofs of Christianity, some doubtless will be offended at the omission of several points on which much stress has been laid in other books of theology; such as Christ's curing Absgarus prince of Edessa, the testimonies of Phlegon and Thallus to the

the darkness at the passion, with the observations of a Chinese philosopher on the darkness, the proposal of the emperor Tiberius to enrol Jesus among the gods, the testimony of Josephus to his resurrection, the accounts of the Thebean and Thundering legions, &c. &c. Some of those points, though admitted by the author, are not insisted on in this treatise; as he does not wish to advance any argument which could be controverted by the Deist, who would readily quote those good Christians and learned critics who have doubted of such points. The argument from types the author approves of, but does not urge; as it might lead men destitute of judgment to employ far-fetched types which tend to expose religion to the ridicule of its enemies. The profits of this work are intended for the poor of three parishes, one of which the author has lately resigned: for these parishes he is indebted to his good friend and patron Dr. Fowler, Lord Archbishop of Dublin, who has encouraged and amply rewarded his exertions in the cause of religion. Nor can he conclude this preface without expressing

pressing his acknowledgments to those who have subscribed to this work; and particularly to the Rev. Robert Fowler, Archdeacon of Dublin, for his active zeal in obtaining him many (y) subscribers.

(y) Fifty.

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E R R A T A.

- Page 44, line 15, for throns read thorns,
 Page 57, line 17, for suppositious read supposititious,
 Page 61, line 3, for Antonius read Antoninus,
 Page 62, line 19, for Tigellinam read Tigellinum,
 Page 62, line 23, for punise read punire,
 Page 64, line 5, for Antonius read Antoninus,
 Page 66, line 21, for Satuminus read Saturninus,
 Page 169, line 6, put a comma after the word plain,
 Page 196, line 21, for Pythagoran read Pythagorean,
 Page 250, line 3, for horrid read torrid.

12 JY 62

A S H O R T

A

SHORT VIEW

OF THE

EVIDENCES, &c.

CHAP. I.

A SHORT VIEW OF THE EVIDENCES OF
THE MOSAIC CODE.

Chief arguments to prove the truth of the Scriptures.—Moses had certain information of what he wrote—Was a man of truth and candour—Could not have deceived his followers, if disposed to an imposture.—His law was not forged.—Nor corrupted; nor altered.—Miracles performed only by God or his messengers.—

B

—Miracles

Evidences of the Truth

—Miracles the best proof of the divine authority of a revelation.—Moses wrought miracles.—His divine commission proved by temporal sanctions.—And by the fulfilment of his prophecies.—The evidences of the mosaic code summed up.

CHAP. I. **I**N proving the truth of the Jewish and Christian religions, it will be necessary to demonstrate, that the writers could not have been mistaken in what they relate, that they were candid and honest in their relations, that neither the law nor the gospel was forged, that each of them was truly handed down to us, and that Moses and Christ performed miracles, and delivered prophecies, which were exactly fulfilled. Some Jewish and Pagan authors of the first three centuries, the Talmudists, Christian heretics and apocryphal books bear testimony to several facts of the new testament, and render it more credible than any profane history. The information and candour of the apostles and evangelists, the impossibility of forging, corrupting

CHIEF arguments
to prove
the truth of
the Scriptures.

rupting or altering the new testament without detection, the miracles of Christ, the accomplishment of his predictions, the apostacy of many Jews from the law to a persecuted religion, the rapid propagation of Christianity, the life and doctrines of its author, the conversion of Paul, the happy effects it produced, and the undesigned coincidence of the writers of the new testament, all conspire to prove its truth and authenticity. These and other points, when fully proved, will form a moral demonstration of the divinity of the Scriptures; and silence, if not convince the Infidel, who considers them. In proving the truth of these points, we shall perceive the falsehood of the opinion that Christianity is not founded on argument; an opinion, which must appear false to any person, who shall carefully peruse the following pages. I agree with the Deist, that the belief of the truth of Christianity was not originally founded on argument; since its first authors did not reason about it as we do. Their miracles were sufficient

CHAP.
I.

CHAP. evidence of its truth; and surely the evi-
 1. dence must have been strong, which made
 it unnecessary to reason about it.

Moses had
 certain in-
 formation
 of what
 he wrote

2. In proving the truth of the Mosaic account it will be necessary to shew, that the author was well informed himself in what he relates, and neither willing nor able to deceive others. When he wrote, his judgment was matured by experience; and his understanding improved by the wisdom of the Egyptians. In his four last books he wrote what he saw, heard or performed; and he became acquainted with the origin of mankind and the history of former ages, by a lineal tradition from Adam to his own time. Adam died in the year of the world 930, and Lamech the father of Noah was born in the year 874; so that Adam and Lamech were contemporaries for fifty-six years. Methuselah the grandfather of Noah was born in the year of the world 687 and died in the year 1656; so that Noah was a contemporary with Methuselah for 600 years. Shem the son of Noah having
 been

been a cotemporary of Abraham; Isaac, CHAP.
I.
Jacob and their descendants must have been acquainted with the history of preceding times; nor could Moses have been ignorant thereof, even tho' we should suppose him not to have been inspired.

3. And as Moses was well informed in what he relates; so he was a man of truth and candour. He did not write for the purpose of flattering his nation, nor to advance himself or his family to wealth or power. He records Noah's drunkenness, Sarah's want of faith, the cruelty of Simeon and Levi to the Shechemites, the envy and murmurings of his sister Miriam, and the idolatry and rebellion of his brother Aaron; nor did he conceal his own failings, nor even his own unadvised thoughts, which none but God and himself could know. So far was he from flattering the Israelites that he called them hard-hearted and stiff-necked; and represented them as perverse, diffident in God, seditious, ungrateful, and prone to idolatry.

Moses was
a man of
truth and
candour.

He

CHAP.

I.

He left not his own children any office of honour or emolument, but that of simple Levites ; and we find that Joshua was appointed the general to conduct the Israelites into the promised land. In short he does not spare his own family, his countrymen, or himself, but records their errors and blemishes with candour, and does not attempt to palliate or excuse them. The writers also who succeeded Moses, candidly relate the murder and adultery of David, the idolatry and voluptuousness of Solomon, and other points, which were disgraceful to the Hebrew worthies and to the Hebrew nation.

Moses
could not
have de-
ceived his
followers,
if disposed
to an im-
posture.

4. And as Moses was a candid man and superior to fraud ; so he would have found it impossible to deceive the Israelites in what he relates, were he disposed to an imposture. He never could have persuaded a whole people that they had seen rivers turned into blood, frogs filling the houses of the Egyptians, their fields destroyed by hail and locusts, their lands covered with darkness, their first born slain in one night, the
red

red sea dividing and forming a wall for the Israelites but overwhelming their enemies, a pillar of a cloud and of fire conducting them, manna falling from heaven for their food, Korah, Dathan and Abiram terribly destroyed, &c. Had these things been false their falshood must have been known to all his followers, and exposed by Korah and his company, who envied him in the wilderness. Had these things been invented by Moses or by any other person, long after they were said to have happened; every man would have cried out, these are marvellous things, but we never heard of them before. Were Moses an impostor, he would have appealed to miracles done in private in the presence of a few; and not publickly in Egypt, where pretenders to miracles were numerous, and where the magicians would be sure of detecting his art.

5. The following observations evince that the Mosaic code was not forged or altered. If it was established when the Israelites

CHAP.
I.

His Law
was not
forged.

CHAP.

I.

been authentic ; since if false every Israelite must have known it to be so, and rejected it as such. If it was proposed at some distance from the conquest, it must have been rejected by the Israelites, who then had laws, which secured to them their estates and privileges. If it was forged by an individual, he would have had no authority to impose it on his own tribe, much less on all the tribes each of which was independent of the rest. If it was fabricated by a zealous Jew to do honour to his nation, he would have suppressed the failings of the patriarchs, &c ; and if it was forged by the priests, sanhedrim or kings, it would have been calculated to advance their respective interests. It was not invented during the reign of the kings ; as there subsisted an incessant dissention between Saul and David, between David and Absalom, between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, between the two tribes, and the ten tribes. If the books of the old testament were forged by one man, they could not so differ in stile ; if by different

ferent persons, it would have been impossible to conceal the forgery: nor is it probable that a whole nation should join in an imposture, and no apostate discover it. On the revolt of the ten tribes from the true worship of God, Jeroboam would doubtless have discovered a cheat, if there had been any. But this apostate was so far from making such a discovery, that we find him acknowledging the divine origin of the law while he was prompting men to transgress it. On exhibiting idols to the people he thus addressed them, "behold thy gods O Israel which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Here he ascribes their deliverance to a divine power; but maintains that the two calves were the gods, which delivered them. Had Josias forged the law, the idolatrous kings, who succeeded him would have detected the forgery; and the following observations prove it was not fabricated by Ezra a learned Jew, who reformed the church and state on the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. Prophets who preceded

Ezra

CHAP.

I.

who should disregard the law ; while other prophets boldly exposed themselves to danger for the law during the captivity and before Ezra is supposed to have forged it. (c) Ezra asserts that when the Jews first came from Babylon, they sacrificed to God according to the law of Moses ; and could not have made this assertion, if the law had not been known before his own time. If Ezra forged the law and the prophets, he must have done so to advance the honour or emolument of himself, of the Levites or of their ancestors. He did not consult his own honour ; as the only compliment paid him in Scripture (d) is that he was a “ re- dy scribe in the law of Moses.” He did not compose a new scripture to serve the Levites, whom he excluded from any property in land, and even from tithes every seventh year on which the land was to be uncultivated. The author of the Pentateuch did not intend to do honour to the Levites ; as the law represents their ancestor

(c) Ch. iii.

(d) Ezra Ch. viii.

as cruel to the Shechemites, exposes the negligence of the priests under Joash, and their impieties and debaucheries under Eli :

CHAP.
I.

which he would have suppressed had it been his object *to do honour* to this tribe. Had he intended *to do honour* to his ancestors he would not have told that the ten patriarchs sold their brother Joseph, nor represented his nation as a murmuring, hard-hearted and ungrateful people. Had he been influenced by a regard to Moses he would have concealed his murder, his incredulity and his disobedience to the law.

(e) Ezra obliged both the priests and people to put away their idolatrous wives, whom they married contrary to the law ; which he would not have ventured to do, if he had forged the law. The law required the rich to restore their lands to the poor on the year of Jubilee ; and the rich, after the Babylonish captivity, complied with this law : which they would not have done, had the law been then fabricated by Ezra. Nor could Ezra have imposed forged Scriptures

(e) Ch. x.

on

CHAP. on the people; if he were disposed to do
 I. so. For though the Jews, who returned
 with him from Babylon, should join in a
 forgery; yet we cannot suppose that they
 who staid behind, would repair thrice every
 year to Jerusalem, observe Sabbatical
 years, jubilees, solemn feasts, and other
 observances, that were troublesome and expensive,
 or voluntarily endure death rather than abjure a law,
 which they never heard of before. If the law was
 forged, its ceremonies would not have been practised;
 and if its matters of fact had been invented in
 Israel, they would have been rejected in Judah.
 The Jews of Alexandria, who shewed a desire of
 coalescing with the Heathens, those Jews who
 joined with the Heathens in the persecutions of
 Antiochus, (f) or the Samaritans, who were
 enemies of the Jews, would have detected any
 forgery if they were able to do so. But the Samaritans
 were so far from charging the Jewish Pentateuch
 with a forgery, that there is a wonderful agreement
 between it and the

(f) Maccab. i. 2.

Samaritan

Samaritan, though they are written in different characters. The books ascribed to Moses having been translated by the 70 in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus; it is absurd to suppose that it could have been forged after that: nor is it credible that the Pharisees, Sadducees, or other Jewish sects, which hated each other, should join in a forgery.

6. And as the Mosaic law was not forged, so it was preserved and handed down pure and unaltered. It would have been impossible to forge or alter the civil as well as religious code of the Jews, without being detected by persons injured by such alterations. A man might forge a statute book for England, but would find it difficult to persuade the judges, lawyers and people it was that by which causes were decided for many centuries before. The law having been the deed, by which the promised land was divided among the Israelites; it is improbable that this people, who possessed that land, would have suffered it to be altered.

CHAP.
I.
The Mosaic law was not corrupted or altered.

CHAP. I. tered. The distinction of the twelve tribes and their separate interests made it more difficult to alter the Jewish law, than that of other nations less jealous than the Jews. The law requires men to read it publickly, solemnly, and frequently, to teach it to their children, to write it on their garments, &c.; and a passage of Deuteronomy forbid the Israelites to add unto the law, or to subtract ought from it. These precepts and prohibitions could not have been given by an impostor, who was adding to it, and who would have wished men to forget rather than enjoined them to remember it. All persons having been obliged to know and observe the law under severe penalties; it could not have been falsified or altered at any time since it was promulgated. Moses deposited the law in the side of the ark; and left one copy of it for each tribe. It was read in the places of worship at least every sabbath (g); and at the end of every seven years, at the feast of Tabernacles before all the people (h). The people, who

(g) St. Luke.

(h) Deut. xxxi, 26.

were

were to teach their children must have had ^{CHAP.}
copies of it, the priests must have had co- ^{I.}
pies of it, and the magistrates must have
had copies of it as being the law of the
land. The enmity, which subsisted between
the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, prevent-
ed either from altering the law; and the
agreement of the Samaritan and Hebrew
Pentateuch renders it probable, that each of
them is a copy of the same original. Even
the Hebrew false prophets never questioned
the authority of the law; but pretended to
speak in the name of the God, who deli-
vered it to Moses. The Hebrews used to
reckon the verses, the words and even the
letters of each book; which rendered it
difficult to alter or corrupt the Scriptures.
The Jewish doctors, fearing to add any
thing to the law, passed their own notions
as traditions or explanations of it. Both
Christ and the apostles accused the Jews of
a prejudiced regard for those traditions, but
never charged them with having corrupted
the Scriptures themselves. Since Christ's
coming they frequently suffered martyrdom
even for

CHAP. for their Scriptures; which they would not
 I. have done had they suspected them to have
 been corrupted or changed. Upon the
 whole it appears that the Pentateuch was
 true and authentic; as its author was well
 informed, candid, and unable to deceive,
 and as it was impossible to have forged,
 corrupted or altered it without detection.

Miracles
 performed
 only by
 God or
 his mes-
 sengers.

7. Neither reason nor religion authorize
 us to imagine, that miracles were performed
 by any being but God or his messengers.
 He alone, who made the world, can alter
 its settled course; none can interrupt or
 suspend the laws of nature but he who con-
 trived them; nor can any thing be done in
 the universe without his permission or direc-
 tion. From analogy we judge that there is
 a gradation of beings between us and God;
 and that each order acts in its own sphere,
 like those that are below us. Human crea-
 tures are unconcerned with other systems,
 but have each of them his duty pointed out
 for him in this: and if other systems are
 regulated by the same laws, the inhabitants
 have

have no more influence over us than we ^{CHAP.} have over them. Angels may be more no-^{I.}ble in their natures than man, without exercising any power on earth, or performing every thing which he does; just as some brutes surpass human creatures in strength or swiftness. The Scriptures likewise inform us that God alone can raise the dead, and suppose angels, spirits or men incapable of performing miracles without a commission from him. The sacred writings do not represent God's agents as acting according to their own mere pleasure; nay Moses and Christ refer their miracles to God, and speak of themselves only as the instruments of his providence. From the repeated threats of Moses against forcerers and magicians, some have imagined that these men were endued with supernatural powers. But surely his laws against forcery must have been levelled against pretenders to miracles only; since it would be in vain to enact laws against men, who performed real ones, and could easily prevent the execution of such laws. The Hebrew law-
C giver

CHAP. giver prohibited pretensions to miracles,
^{I.} which were founded on idolatry and the
source of cruel or immoral rites; and Christ
guarded his followers against impostors,
who might appeal to false miracles as proofs
of their divinity. By a real miracle I mean
an unusual but sensible effect, which can
not be produced by natural causes or by the
power or skill of man: such as dividing the
sea, stopping the sun's course, walking un-
hurt in a fiery furnace, raising the dead,
and curing the disorders of distant persons
instantly or by a word. These and other
supernatural effects must have been pro-
duced by commissions from God, who alone
can alter, suspend or control his own laws
with respect to the human frame, and to the
constitution of the universe. Hence we
may conclude those men to be divinely
commissioned, who performed such works;
and from these it will appear that Moses
and Christ had commissions from the Al-
mighty.

8. Of all arguments in support of a re-
velation, that drawn from miracles is the
most clear, the most certain, and the most
forcible. Abstract reasonings are not al-
ways clear to the wise, much less to the ig-
norant or superstitious; while miracles as
objects of sense, are suited to the rich and
poor, to the acute and dull, to the philo-
sopher and the peasant: Miracles strike the
mind with awe and surprize, command the
assent of men of all conditions, and beget
a reverence for him, who can accomplish
things by a single word. They satisfy the
wise that they were the work of God, and
tend to convert men to the faith, who want
leisure, abilities or inclination for subtle
disquisitions: Miracles being the work of
God alone, we may safely receive as divine
the doctrine of him, who wrought them;
since we may be certain that God would
not set his seal to any doctrine but his own.
Miracles establish a religious system at once,
and render it unnecessary to prove the truth
of each doctrine by different arguments. If
men could not embrace a religion before

CHAP.

I

Miracles
the best
proof of
the divine
authority
of a reve-
lation:

CHAP. they reasoned on its doctrines ; they would
^{1.}
not be qualified to learn their catechisms, until they learned logic in the schools or universities. As doctrines may be wise without being immediately dictated by the spirit of God ; we can not be certain of their divinity, unless they are confirmed by miracles. Ignorance, superstition and vice, darken the mind and disable it from judging what doctrines are good ; and the vicious are generally prejudiced against those, which enjoin purity and virtue. Were an idolatrous nation to mind no miracle, unless they approved of the doctrines of him who wrought it ; they would judge of these from their prevailing notions, and reject the doctrines which forbid idolatry. Was every man to discuss the doctrine before he admitted the miracle, the conversion of such men would be slow, and necessarily attended with endless disputes. Since then miracles are the best mode of establishing an useful system of religion : we may reasonably expect, that a wise and good God would employ them for the benefit of his creatures.

creatures. Horace, speaking of the machinery of the drama, forbids the interposition of a God, unless to accomplish some great end unattainable without it: and surely the idolatrous state of the world in the time of Moses, and the corruptions of religion and morality at Christ's appearance, prove this maxim was applicable to those periods. Deliverance from error and vice is an end worthy of the divine interposition; as it includes the interest not only of individuals but of human kind, not for a limited time but during the ages of eternity.

9. Having proved that none can work miracles but God or his messengers; I proceed to prove the divine commission of Moses from the miracles which he performed. He relates the passage of the Israelites through the Red sea on dry ground, the thunderings, lightnings and the noise of the trumpet when the law was delivered, the pillar of a cloud, which conducted them by day and the pillar of fire by night, the miraculous manna, which fed them for
forty

CHAP.
I.

Moses
wrought
miracles.

CHAP. I. forty years and their garments lasting during that time without decay. These and other miracles having been performed in the sight of hundreds of thousands; it was impossible for so many to have been imposed on themselves, and equally impossible that all should conspire in attesting a falsehood. The cleaving of the earth at the desire of Moses, and its swallowing up Korah, Dathan and Abiram with their people, was such a momentous fact as could not have been mistaken. The death of so many was remarkable; and so was the destruction of 250 princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, who perished by fire for rebelling against Aaron. Moses recapitulated his miracles in Egypt and in the wilderness, and appealed to those who were present for the truth of them: which no wise man would have done, if he could have been confuted. If Moses, Aaron and a few others only, pretended to have wrought miracles; they would have found it impossible to make thousands believe, what every person must have known to be false, if it was

was so. If the claim to miracles was false CHAP.
and as ancient as Moses, all the Israelites ^{I.}
must have assented to what they knew to be
an imposture. Nor could a forgery have
been imposed on the Hebrews at any sub-
sequent period; since a rebellious people
would naturally have said of the pretended
miracles of Moses, these are extraordinary
things, but we never heard of them before.
The miracles of Moses were proposed by
this lawgiver as motives to the observance
of his laws; which he would not have
done if they had not been wrought. The
miraculous deliverance of the Israelites out
of Egypt, is the chief motive of obedience
to the law; and all its exhortations are
founded on the wonders which God
wrought for them. As a preamble to the
decatalogue we find the following words:
“ I am the Lord thy God, which brought
“ thee out of the land of Egypt, out of
“ the house of bondage.” They who doubt
or deny the divine authority of Moses, al-
low him to have been a wise lawgiver; and
it is absurd to suppose that such a man
would

CHAP. would weaken the authority of a wise code,
^I
 by blending with it an account of miracles which never were performed. Some think it impossible to resist the evidence of miracles, and can not believe that the Israelites would have worshipped idols, had they seen the wonders related by Moses. But miracles do not absolutely determine the will; and we have the testimony of a philosopher that he would have resisted them though he had seen them with his eyes. (i) "Make the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, or raise the dead," says he, "and I shall not be shaken by this." Such was the opinion of this freethinker relative to miracles; while others of his fraternity maintain the impossibility of resisting their force. Voltaire expresses a surprize that the Egyptian and Greek historians are silent about the plagues of Egypt, and the safe passage of the Israelites through the Red sea, while their enemies were drowned. The silence of the Egyptian writers concerning miracles, which were disgraceful to their nation

(i) See the Jewish Lett. to Voltaire, Lett. vi.

and

and to their gods, is rather a proof that CHAP.
those miracles were performed; since they I.
would have denied them had they not been
wrought. Besides, a fact may be true and
be suppressed by historians; for all the
Roman historians conceal the following
matter, namely, that Porfenna in his league
with the Romans, forbid the use of iron
except in implements of agriculture (*k*).
Mr. Gibbon affirms, that the contempo-
raries of Moses and Joshua beheld with
careless indifference the most amazing mi-
racles. But let me ask how he came to
know this? “ When they saw the water of
“ the Red sea becoming a wall to them on
“ the right hand and on the left, they fear-
“ ed; when they perceived the thunder-
“ ings, the lightnings, the noise of the
“ trumpet, and mount Sinai smoking they
“ stood afar off, and said unto Moses,
“ speak thou with us and we will hear, but
“ let not God speak with us lest we die.”
The Israelites were so sensibly affected by
these miracles, that they did not apostatize

(*k*) Plin. Hist. Nat. xxxiv, 14.

CHAP. from God's worship while Moses and Jo-
 I. shua lived; but when they were dead and
 another generation rose, which knew not
 the Lord nor the works which he had
 done, the Israelites relapsed into idolatry
 and disobedience. Yet we are not to con-
 clude from such relapses and acts of disobe-
 dience, that they disbelieved those miracles;
 since a man may believe a religion to be
 divine and violate its precepts, and trans-
 gress the laws of his country, while he ac-
 knowledges their authority. Since then
 miracles prove the divine interposition, and
 were performed by Moses; there can be
 no room for questioning his divine com-
 mission or the authority of his laws.

His di-
 vine com-
 mission
 proved
 from tem-
 poral
 sanctions.

10. A cursory view of the Jewish his-
 tory, while it convinces us that obedience
 was attended with rewards, and disobe-
 dience with punishments, proves the divine
 authority of Moses, and the influence of
 his promises and threats on the condition
 of his people. Of all institutions none so
 strongly marks the divine legislator as tem-
 poral

poral functions. In the course of this CHAP.
world rewards and punishments are not ^{1.} ~~~~~
uniformly dispensed, according to the merits or demerits of individuals or nations; in this life there is not an inseparable connection between obedience and rewards, disobedience and punishments. But here, the superiority of Moses to all other lawgivers fully appears. He promised to reward with national prosperity or national judgments, the observance or violation of his laws, and his promises were performed; nor could any except a divine lawgiver have fulfilled such promises. The power of other lawgivers extended only to the punishment of individuals; but not to the chastisement of a whole people, who became vicious or disobedient, much less to the rewarding the virtuous or obedient. This was that privilege of the Hebrew lawgiver, which distinguished him from all other lawgivers, and proves his commission from God, and his wisdom from heaven (1).

(1) See Warburton's divine legation passion.

The

CHAP. II. The divine authority of the Mosaic

^{I.} law is proved, not only from temporal
 By the
 fulfilment
 of his pro-
 phecies. but from the fulfilment of its prophecies.

God alone foresees future and contingent events; that is events, which in the judgment of man, may or may not happen; and none but persons commissioned by him, can foretel such events, before they are accomplished. No person will deny the foreknowledge of God; or his power to inspire men with the gift of prophecy; nor can we doubt that he has endowed certain persons with this gift, if we compare several prophecies with historical events. Moses delivered several prophecies, the most remarkable of which relates to the state, sufferings and preservation of the Jews. This lawgiver (*m*) foretold that the Hebrews should be “ removed into all the kingdoms
 “ of the earth, scattered among all people,
 “ from one end of the earth even unto the
 “ other—find no ease nor rest—be oppressed
 “ and crushed always—be left few in num-
 “ ber among the heathen—pine away in
 “ their

(*m*) Deut. xxviii.

“ their iniquity in their enemies land—be-CHAP.

“ come an astonishment, a proverb and a ^{I.} }
“ by-word among all nations.” Bishop

Newton (*n*) has shewn that these predictions were literally fulfilled, during their subjection to the Chaldeans and Romans; and in latter times, in all nations where they have been dispersed. Moses (*o*) foretold that their enemies would besiege and take their cities; and this prophecy was fulfilled by Shalmanasser king of Assyria, who besieged Samaria, by Sennacherib; who took all the fenced cities of Judah, and by Nebuchadnezzar, who burned the city and temple of Jerusalem (*p*). Moses (*q*) foretold that such grievous famine should prevail during those sieges, that they should eat the flesh of their sons and daughters; and history informs us that they devoured their own children in Samaria and Jerusalem (*r*). Though the Hebrews were to be as numerous as the stars of heaven; yet Moses foretold that they

(*n*) Newton's Dissert. vii. (*o*) Deut. xxviii. (*p*) Newton's Dissert. vii. (*q*) Deut. xvi. (*r*) Newton's Dissert. vii.

would

CHAP. would be few in number, and his prophecy
^{I.} was fulfilled. For in the last siege of Jerusalem and in other parts of Judea, there perished by famine and by the sword, one million two hundred and forty thousand four hundred and ninety Jews (*f*). Since the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, they have been scattered among all nations, have suffered numerous hardships, and yet subsisted a separate people without incorporating with the natives. Nor shall we be surprized at the accomplishment of several predictions of Moses, if we consider the exact completion of prophecies delivered by Isaiah, Daniel, Malachi, Haggai and others, who were in many respects inferior to the Hebrew lawgiver. These men foretold that a great prophet should come into the world, and described the time (*t*), place (*u*) and manner of his birth (*x*), with many particulars of his character (*y*), sufferings and death (*z*). They foretold such

(*f*) Newton's Dissert. xvi. (*t*) Dan. ix. Mal. iii.
 Haggai ii. (*u*) Micah ii. (*x*) Isai. vii. 14. (*y*) Isai.
 xxxv & lxi. (*z*) Isai. liii.

minute

minute circumstances of him, as it would CHAP.
be absurd to ascribe to chance or conjecture; ^{I.} }
such as his riding on an ass into Jerusalem
(*a*), being sold for thirty pieces of silver
(*b*), scourged, buffeted and spit upon (*c*),
the piercing his hands and feet (*d*), being
numbered among transgressors (*e*), their
casting lots for his garments (*f*), men's
eyes being closed (*g*) that they should not
know him, &c. A very learned author (*h*)
has produced from the old testament nu-
merous prophecies relative to the Messiah,
and shewed that those prophecies were ex-
actly fulfilled in Jesus, and are not appli-
cable to any other person. All those pro-
phecies, having been in the custody of the
Jews, could not have been fabricated by
the Christians; so that the Jews should al-
low the Messiah to be come, or fairly ac-
knowledge the falsehood of their prophe-
cies. Many of the Jews applied those pre-

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| (<i>a</i>) Zech. ix, 9. | (<i>b</i>) Ib. xi, 12. | (<i>c</i>) Isai. l, 6. |
| (<i>d</i>) Pf. xxii, 16. | (<i>e</i>) Isai. liii, 12. | (<i>f</i>) Pf. xxii, 18. |
| (<i>g</i>) Isai. xxix, 10. | (<i>h</i>) Huetii Demonstrat. Evang. | |
- Prop. ix.

dictions

CHAP. I. dictions to Jesus and embraced his religion;
 { and their testimonies should have weight,
 as they had been prejudiced against him.
 For 300 years before the Christian æra, the
 Jews admitted the translation of the seventy
 interpreters, who were appointed by Pto-
 lemy Philadelphus to translate the old tes-
 tament; but finding that this translation
 bore testimony to the messiahship of Jesus,
 they shamefully altered or obscured the pas-
 sages relative to him (i). They who desire
 information concerning prophecies may be
 fully satisfied, by perusing the learned trea-
 tises of Sherlock, Newton, and Hurd, who
 have solidly refuted objections, which have
 been urged against prophecies.

The evi-
 dences of
 the mosaic
 law
 summed
 up.

12. From what has been delivered in this
 chapter, it appears, that the author of the
 Mosaic law was well informed, candid and
 honest in what he relates; and unable to
 impose were he disposed to an imposture.
 Lamech had a sight of Adam, Shem of
 Lamech, Abraham of Shem, Jacob of

(i) See Leslie's Theological Works, vol. i, p. 79, folio.

Abraham

Abraham and Moses of the immediate descendants of Jacob. Moses was the only lawgiver that promised temporal rewards to the observance of his laws; and the performance of this promise proves his commission from God, and the truth of his account. As none but the Author of nature or his messengers can alter or control his laws; we have an additional proof of his divine commission from the miracles which he wrought. He performed them so publicly and solemnly, that it was impossible for them to impose on all the people, many of which were constantly rebelling and relapsing into idolatry. No wise lawgiver would have weakened the authority of his laws, by mixing them with fables; nor urged his people to obedience on the strength of miracles, which never were performed. Miracles are the best proof of the truth of a revelation; as they are addressed to the senses of the rude and refined, and establish the truth of a religious system at once, without subtle disquisitions, for which few possess leisure, talents, or inclination.

D

No

CHAP. No person who examines the facts related by
^{1.} Moses, and the various circumstances of his
law, can suspect it of imposture. It was
impossible to forge the law, when the facts
are supposed to have been recent; or to
alter it afterwards, when multitudes were
interested in preventing an alteration. In-
dividuals never could have succeeded in a
cheat; and it is absurd to suppose, that a
whole nation would conspire in an im-
posture. Having proved that it was not
forged by a zealous Jew, nor by the priests,
nor by Josias nor Ezra; we can not doubt
but it was true and authentic. The law
required the Israelites to let the land lie un-
sowed every seventh year, and to go up to
Jerusalem thrice a year from all parts of
the country. If the law, which enjoined
these and other troublesome and expensive
rites, was forged, men never could have
been unanimous in believing or obeying it.
If the Israelites considered the law as a mere
human invention, they would not have
imputed all their afflictions to violations of
it; nor would their descendants have sacri-
ficed

ficed their lives rather than renounce it. CHAP.
The Mosaic law having been the civil, as ^{I.} well as religious code of the Hebrews; it is absurd to suppose it could have been forged or altered, without the knowledge of the people. The separate interests of the twelve tribes, the frequent and solemn readings of the law, the prohibition of adding to or subtracting from it, the numerous copies of it in the hands of the priests, magistrates and people, the enmity between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and other considerations, rendered it impossible to have forged, altered, or corrupted it without detection. As none but God or his messengers can foretel future and contingent events; the fulfilment of prophecies relative to such events, is considered as a proof of a commission from heaven. Moses foretold that the Hebrews should be scattered among all people, be oppressed, and become a by-word among all nations; which predictions were literally fulfilled under the Chaldeans and Romans, and in latter times in all nations where they have been dispersed.

C H A P. II.

A SHORT VIEW OF THE EVIDENCES OF
THE TRUTH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Jewish and Pagan authors confirm the gospel account of the princes and governors of Judea—And of the state, sects, customs, morals and doctrines of the Jews.—Its truth confirmed by the writings of the apostolical fathers.—By learned Christian writers of the 2d century.—And by learned Christian writers of the 3d century.—By heretical and apocryphal writings.—By the Mishna and Talmuds.—And by Heathen writers of the first three centuries.—The apostles well informed and not deceived in the chief gospel facts.—The apostles were candid and honest.—Free from enthusiasm.—And from worldly ambition.—Divine authority of Christianity proved by the miracles of its author.—By the accomplishment of his predictions.—By the rapid propagation of the gospel.—By the sufferings of its preachers.—By the conversion of Paul.—By

—By the life and doctrines of its author.—
By the undesigned coincidence of the sacred
writers.—And by its happy effects.—The
books of the new Testament authentic.—Not
forged, interpolated, or altered.—The evi-
dences of the truth of Christianity summed
up.

WE may be satisfied of the truth of CHAP.
II.
the gospel history from the testi-
mony of Pagan and Jewish authors, of Jewish
and Pagan
authors
confirm
the gospel
account of
the
princes
and go-
vernors of
Judea.
learned Christian writers of the first three
centuries, from heretical and apocryphal
writings, and from the Mishna and Tal-
muds. Dr. Lardner has, from Pagan and
Jewish writers, proved the truth of several
matters which are occasionally mentioned
in the new testament, such as the names of
princes and governors, with the state, opi-
nions, and practices of the Jews: and to
him we are indebted for the particulars of
the argument which is here exhibited brief-
ly, for the instruction of those who have
not perused the original. This very learned
writer illustrates the Scripture account of
persons,

CHAP. ^{II.} persons, facts, customs and doctrines by
passages of ancient authors; and derives
credibility to the miracles, resurrection,
and other principal facts, from the truth
of facts mentioned but occasionally or in-
cidentally. It is a strong proof of the truth
of any history, if we find many of its facts
in contemporary writers; and from this
principle we derive one argument of the
truth of the new testament. Josephus and
Pagan authors mention Herod, Archelaus,
Pontius Pilate, and other persons spoken of
in the new testament; and differ but little
from the sacred writers, about their offices
and characters. From *these* we collect, that
Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in
the days of Herod the king: and from
Josephus that a prince of this name reigned
over all Judea for thirty-seven years, even
to the reign of Augustus. On the death of
Herod he left three sons, Archelaus, Herod
Antipas, and Philip; and Josephus as-
sures us that the whole country, which be-
fore was governed by the father, was di-
vided among the sons. Archelaus a cruel
and

and tyrannical prince succeeded to Judea ^{CHAP.}
properly so called; and no wonder the fear ^{II.}
of him prevented Joseph and Mary from
coming into his territories, on their return
from Egypt, whither they fled to save the
child. According to Josephus, Herod An-
tipas was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea,
and Philip tetrarch of Trachonitis and of
the neighbouring countries; and according
to St. Luke, these men were tetrarchs in
the 15th year of Tiberius. Three of the
four Evangelists relate the marriage of this
Herod to Herodias the wife of his brother
Philip; and this unlawful marriage is men-
tioned in the antiquities of Josephus. It
is probable from the character of John the
Baptist, that he would oppose such a mar-
riage; and that, in consequence of his op-
position, Herodias might use her influence
with Herod to behead John, and desire to
see his head, to be sure that her orders were
executed. In the Acts we are informed, that
“ Herod the king stretched forth his hands
“ to vex certain of the church, and that
“ he killed James the brother of John
with

CHAP. "with the sword." Josephus assures us,
^{II.}
that one Herod Agrippa was exalted to a throne by Caligula and Claudius; and it is probable that the Christians were persecuted by him, who was violently attached to the Jewish institutions. St. Luke and Josephus agree, as to the disease of which Herod Agrippa died. The former says he was eaten of worms, as a judgment from God for his vanity and ingratitude; and the latter says he died of an ulcer, which bred worms. Herod Agrippa had three daughters, Bernice, Mariamne and Drusilla; and both Josephus and St. Luke agree, that the last was married to Felix governor of Judea. According to Tacitus, Felix was arbitrary and unjust; and Josephus affirms, that he prompted a man to assassinate the high-priest, who advised him to correct his mal-administration. It was not unnatural for such a man to tremble, when St. Paul "preached on righteousness, "temperance, and judgment to come," and to hope that money should be given him.

him by St. Paul that he might loose him. CHAP.
II.
Such was the conformity between some Jewish and Pagan authors, and the writers of the New Testament, relative to the princes and governors of Judea!

2. Other authors agree with the sacred writers, in respect to the state of the Jews in Judea and other countries, and to their sects, doctrines, morals, and customs in the apostolic age. According to Josephus, the Jews enjoyed the free exercise of their religion, with a power of accusing and prosecuting, but not of putting any man to death. In consequence of this power, they were importunate with the Roman Governor to crucify Jesus; and Pilate said unto them "take ye him and judge him according to your law; and they said we have no power to put any man to death." It appears from Philo, Josephus and other writers, that the Jews were dispersed in many countries, before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; and we find that St. Paul preached in the Jewish Synagogues in

They agree as to the state, sects, doctrines, morals, and customs of the Jews.

CHAP. in Antioch, Iconium, Thessalonica, Athens,
^{II.}
 in Ephesus and in Rome. “After the
 “strictest sect of our religion” says St.
 Paul, “I lived a Pharisee;” and accord-
 ing to Josephus, the Pharisees were the
 most religious of the Jews, and the most
 exact and skilful in explaining the laws.
 The Gospels frequently mention the tra-
 dition of the Elders; and Josephus affirms,
 that the Pharisees delivered many institu-
 tions, which are not written in the law of
 Moses. The Scriptures represent the Pha-
 risees as having considerable influence with
 the people, and abusing their credulity;
 and of this the history of Josephus furnishes
 a signal instance. According to the Gos-
 pels, the Pharisees and Sadducees differed
 in some religious points; and Josephus calls
 the Sadducees, the sect which was opposite
 to the Pharisees. “The former say there is
 “neither angel nor spirit, but the Pharisees
 “confess both:” and Josephus assures us
 that the Pharisees held the immortality of
 the Soul; while the Sadducees maintained
 that it perished with the Body. It is said

in

in the gospels that the Pharisees "fast often"; CHAP.
II. and Josephus declares, they practised great temperance and never indulged in luxury. The woman of Samaria told our Saviour, that our fathers worshiped in the mountain Gerizim; and Josephus informs us, that Mount Gerizim was esteemed the most sacred of all mountains. The Scriptures express the mutual hatred of the Jews and Samaritans; and Josephus in different parts of his work, confirms the Gospel history in this respect. The Evangelists represent the Jews as extremely wicked, in Our Saviour's time; and Josephus gives a similar account of them. Jesus called them "an evil and adulterous generation;" and according to Josephus, they left no evil unpractised, and strove to exceed each other in impiety and injustice. "If," says this historian, "the Romans delayed to come against those wretches, the City would have been swallowed by an earthquake, overwhelmed by a deluge, or consumed by fire from Heaven as Sodom was; for it bore a generation of men more wicked

CHAP. ^{II.} “wicked than those which suffered such
“calamities.” The Romans affixed to the
instrument of the punishment of malefac-
tors, a writing expressing their crime;
which writing was called in Latin a title:
and therefore Pilate wrote a title and put
it on the Cross, and the writing was “Je-
“sus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.”
Agrippa having received a tetrarchy from
Calligula, with the privilege of wearing
a crown; the Alexandrians, in derision,
seated a half mad-man on a lofty seat, put
a paper crown on his head, and a reed in
his right hand, for a scepter. The Jews
likewise put a crown of thorns on the head
of Jesus, and a reed in his right hand;
and insultingly hailed the king of the
Jews. Jesus bore his own Cross; and it
appears from the following passage of Plu-
tarch that criminals bore theirs. “Every
“kind of wickedness produces its own
“particular torments; just as every male-
“factor, when he is brought forth to exe-
“cution carries his own cross.” In the Acts
we are informed that there was a great
dearth

dearth through the land of Judea in the CHAP.
II. days of Claudius; and it appears from } Josephus, that Helene the Queen of the Adiabenes, relieved a scarcity which happened in Judea in the reign of that Emperor. St. Luke assures us, that Claudius commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome; and Suetonius declares he expelled them for raising disturbances in that city. Dr. Lardner confirms the truth of several other matters occasionally mentioned in the Scriptures, from Philo, Josephus and Heathen authors; and from the truth of the occasional points, infers the truth of such as are principal.

3. Dr. Lardner proves the truth and antiquity of the books of the New Testament, from the testimony of contemporary Christian writers, or of their immediate successors. An epistle ascribed to Barnabas, a companion of Paul, contains some expressions of St. Matthew; and the antiquity of this piece is spoken of by Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, and

Its truth confirmed by the writings of the apostolical fathers.

CHAP. and others. Clemens Romanus, a conteri-
II. porary of St. Paul, in his epistle to the
Corinthians, refers to Paul's first epistle to
that people, alludes to the Acts of the apos-
tles, and to some passages of Matthew,
Mark and Luke; Hermas seems to allude
to three of the gospels, to the Acts, and to
several of the epistles. Ignatius expressly
ascribes to St. Paul the epistle to the Ephe-
sians, and plainly alludes to the gospels of
St. Matthew and St. John. Polycarp quotes
the epistles of St. Paul to the Philippians,
with some expressions of St Matthew and
St. Luke; and refers to the Acts of the a-
postles, to several epistles of St. Paul, and
to other parts of the New Testament.
These are called the Apostolical Fathers;
because they were the contemporaries, ac-
quaintances, or immediate successors of the
Apostles. The works of the apostolical fa-
thers might perhaps have been at first pub-
lished anonymously, from a dread of per-
secution; but the authors were well known
to their own party, nor do we find any
difference among the ancients relative to
them.

them. The antiquity of those writings being admitted; it is immaterial whether they were written by those whose names they bear, or not: especially as from their writings we may be certain, that the authors were pious and good men. Those writings (*k*) tho' not free from errors, are pious and moral, worthy of the apostolical age, and of apostolical men, and not calculated to serve any party, nor to countenance any opinion of the sects of philosophy. They were written in a stile of Evangelical simplicity, in a spirit of peace, charity and resignation, and without that display of learning, which is to be met with in the writings of the Fathers of the 2d and 3d centuries. Their exhortations to unity, prove that there were divisions among the Christians; which divisions would have rendered it impossible to forge or interpolate the Scriptures without detection (*l*).

(*k*) Archbishop Wake's Genuine Epist. of Apostolical Fathers.

(*l*) Compare this Sect. with the 20th and 21st Sect. of this Ch.

CHAP.

II.

By writers of the second century.

4. The writers of the second century also bear testimony to the truth of the books of the new testament. A. D. 116, Papias mentioned the gospels of Matthew and Mark, quoted some of the epistles, and referred to various parts of the new testament. In the first apology, which Justin martyr presented to the emperor Antoninus Pius in the year 140, he quoted the gospels, referred to the Acts, and to divers epistles, and mentioned the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. In the same apology he spoke of the miracles and crucifixion of our Saviour; and for the truth of both appealed to the acts made under Pilate, which he would not have ventured to do, if those acts did not exist, or if they did not contain the facts which he alluded to. In supporting his opinions among the professors of Christianity also, he quoted the four gospels or referred to them; which he would not have done, if they wanted authority. He spoke of them also, though but slightly and incidentally, in answering

(m) Apol. p. 71, 56, & 98. Lond. edit. 1722.

the

the questions of the orthodox Christians, none of which insinuated that they were not genuine or authentic (*n*). Dionysius of Corinth, Tatian, Hegesippus, Melito, and Irenæus, who flourished about the year 174, quoted or alluded to different parts of the New Testament, wrote harmonies of the gospels, expressed several things in the scripture stile, or shewed their acquaintance with the sacred writings. The gospels were authentic in the time of Irenæus; because he frequently quoted them in his attacks on the Gnostics, Marcionites, Valentinians, Carpocratians, Cerdonians and other heretics of his time; which he would not have done, if they had not then a considerable degree of credit and authority. Athenagoras, Miltiades, Theophilus, Pantenus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Polycrates, Heraclitus, Maximus, Candidus, Sextus, Arabianus, Hermias Serapion, &c. &c. (who wrote about the year 190) quoted or referred to the gospels

(*n*) *Quæst. & Responsa ad Orthodox. Quæst. lxxv, lxxxvii, cxxxi.*

CHAP. ^{21.} or epistles; and defended them against the attacks of heathens and heretics. Tertul-
 lian, who flourished in the year 200, has a number of passages from the four gospels, from the book of the Acts, and from the epistles; and he has quoted those passages, as if their truth was never questioned. Those passages are the same with those in our bibles; which shews they were not forged, interpolated, or altered since his time. Ten authors, whose works are lost, bore testimony to the truth of the Gospels, during the first two centuries; and some of them defended Christianity against Jews, Heathens and heretics.

And by
 writers of
 the third
 century.

5. In the third century we find many men famous for their worth, abilities and knowledge who bore testimony to the Scriptures, by their writings and by their blood. M. Felix, Apollonius, Caius, Asterius Urbanus, Alexander, Hippolytus and Ammonius referred to the New Testament, commented on it, wrote harmonies on it,

or

or defended it against its opponents early in ^{CHAP.} the third century: A. D. 230, Origen ^{II.} quoted the four Gospels; and the passages which he quoted, correspond exactly with what we find in the New Testament; though they were advanced only incidentally, and not for the purpose of proving the truth of the Scriptures. Firmilian and Gregory bishop of Neo-Cæsarea, Dionysius bishop of Alexandria, Cyprian bishop of Carthage, Dionysius bishop of Rome, and Commodian, Meletion, and Anatolius, three learned Heathen converts, referred to different books of the New Testament, commented on it, acknowledged its divine authority, or died martyrs to it about the year 260. Pierius and Dorotheus wrote learnedly and elegantly; and both Victorinus and Methodius who commented on the scriptures, suffered martyrdom towards the close of the third century. A. D. 290 Lucian, a learned presbyter of Antioch, published a Greek version of the Old Testament, and an edition of the New; and suffered martyrdom in the presence of

CHAP. Maximin governor of Nicomedia. This
 II. martyr (o) referred Maximin to the Roman
 annals for an account of the darkness at
 the passion, which it is improbable he
 would have done, if he could have been
 convicted of a falsehood. Pamphilus bi-
 shop of Cæsarea died a martyr A. D. 294.
 Soon after, Phileas an Egyptian bishop, of a
 great estate and noble family died in the same
 way, and Poter, a learned bishop of Alex-
 andria, suffered martyrdom in the year 300.
 Most of those authors not only refer to
 and quote the New Testament, but ex-
 press great respect for it; as the work
 of inspired men, and containing an au-
 thentic history of Christ and his doctrines.
 The numerous references to, and quotations
 from it, prove both it and the facts it re-
 lates more authentic and certain, than any
 writings or facts of equal antiquity. Such
 were the principal testimonies of Christian
 writers to the truth of the Scriptures, for
 300 years! testimonies more numerous than
 to any ancient work, contrary to the religious
 establishments of every nation, sometimes

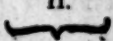
(o) Euseb, Hist. lib. ix, cap. 6. Rufino Interpretæ. to

to men's early prejudices, and in general CHAP. II.
to the temporal happiness and interest of
the witnesses. Dr. Lardner shews, that
some of those writers were complete mas-
ters of Greek literature, of logic, rhetoric,
geometry and arithmetic; which justifies
the following observation of Jerome. "Let
" our enemies, who say the church had no
" philosophers, nor eloquent and learned
" men observe, who and what they were
" who founded, established and adorned it;
" let them cease to accuse our faith of rus-
" ticity, and confess their mistake." It
is undeniable that the writings of those
great and good men contain some erroneous
opinions; but there is no evidence that
those errors were voluntary, or published
for the purpose of deceiving.

6. The diversity of opinion among sec-
taries tends to confirm the truth of Chris-
tianity; since all of them, though differing
in some particulars, agreed in the main
points. Heretics adopted the same books
of the New Testament, which the orthodox
received,

*Its truth
confirmed
by here-
tical and
apocryphal
writings.*

CHAP. received, respected them as written by the
^{II.}
apostles, or by their disciples and companions, and are more reprehensible for perverting the Scriptures, than for despising or rejecting them. Basilides received the gospel of St. Matthew, is not accused of rejecting the other three, nor St. Paul's epistles; and it is certain his son Isidore received the first epistle to the Corinthians. He admitted the epistle to the Romans, and probably the other books of the New Testament; though he perverted many passages, and drew absurd consequences from others. Dr. Lardner thinks it probable that Carpocrates received the books of the New Testament; and this heretic expressed particular respect for Peter and Paul. Cerinthus received several of those books, and admitted the descent of the Holy Ghost on Jesus after his baptism, his miracles, death, resurrection, and other particulars of his history. The Marcosians believed many facts recorded in the Gospels; argued from St. Matthew, and received St. Paul's
epistles,

épistles, the first of St. Peter, and the book CHAP.
of revelations. Marcion allowed Christ's ^{II.} 
miracles, his death and resurrection, the
miraculous darkness and earthquake; while
he rejected several things which were gene-
rally received (p). Novatus the author of
a sect quotes many books of the New Tes-
tament, and expresses respect for them;
Noetus received and regarded the Scriptures,
though he did not understand them like
other Christians; and the Donatists de-
fended the common cause of Christianity
against its opponents. Mani and other
Heathens of his sect embraced Christianity,
from the fame of the wisdom and virtues
of Christ; observed the Lord's day, re-
ceived the Eucharist, and baptized in the
Name of the Father, the Son and the
Holy Ghost. The Manicheans believed
Christ to be God and man, maintained that
he was crucified only in appearance, and
blended the doctrines of the Gospel with
the philosophy of the Magi. However the
Manicheans did not weaken but confirm

(p) Lardner, hist. of heretics.

CHAP. the evidence of Christianity; by acknow-
^{II.}
ledging the divine authority of Christ, and receiving all the New Testament except the book of Acts, which some objected to; as it proved that the Holy Spirit, which was sent down to the Apostles, did not belong to Mani who claimed that power (g). Upon the whole, the heretics alledged the Scriptures in support of their particular tenets; but mutilated or disregarded them, when they clashed with their favourite opinions, or with the tenets of their philosophy. Some who rejected the law admitted the gospel; others insisted on particular tenets of the New Testament, without attending to its general tenour; and all of them maintained their errors by false interpretations of passages taken from the Scriptures. Some heretics wrote apocryphal and spurious books in the names of the apostles; and those apocryphal pieces bear testimony to the most important doctrines and facts of Christianity. In the early ages some men wrote in the names of

(g) Lardner.

Peter,

Peter, Paul, Thomas, Matthias, &c. im-
puted to these men what they never said
nor did; and hoped to recommend some
opinions of their own, by the use of names
which were respected by Christians. But
these writings, though fictitious and soon
laid aside as such, bear testimony to the
truth and antiquity of the Scriptures; as
they admit the dignity and miraculous
power of our Lord, and confirm the truth
of the principal facts and doctrines of the
New Testament. The acts of Paul and
Thecla, the recognitions, the gospels of
Peter, Valentinus and Apelles, the apos-
tolic constitutions and canons, the testa-
ment of the twelve patriarchs, and other
suppositious writings bear testimony to the
facts, principles and books of the New
Testament. The author of the acts of
Paul and Thecla, alleged he wrote out of
love to Paul; the main part of the gospel
of Peter is agreeable to our Saviour's doc-
trine; and the recognitions refer to the
Gospels, Acts, and to some of the epistles.
The Valentinians received all the books of
the

CHAP. the New Testament ; and Jerome mentions

II. a book called the gospel of Apelles, who

received the New Testament though somewhat mutilated. The authors of the apostolical constitutions and canons received

the four Gospels, the Acts, and some epistles of St. Paul ; the testament of the

twelve patriarchs bears testimony to the truth of the New Testament ; and the

Priscillianists, who made use of apocryphal writings, admitted the canonical books of

the Old and New Testament (r). The heretics it is true, who admitted parts of

the New Testament, rejected others ; but it does not appear that they rejected them

for being spurious or forged. The rejection of any part of Scripture by heretics, only

implied, that they did not like it, nor choose to make use of it in their churches.

Nor can we be certain that even the spurious scriptures of the first or second century, were written for the purpose of mis-

leading men ; since some of those scriptures

might

(r) Lardner,

might

might have had their foundation in report CHAP. II.
or false information, others in the credulity
of the writers, others in false philosophy,
and none of them perhaps in an intention
to impose or falsify. Since then there is no
evidence that the spurious scriptures were
written with an intention of deceiving;
much less can we entertain such a suspicion
of the writings of the New Testament,
or of the authors of it. However, we are
not to ascribe to those spurious scriptures,
the same authority as to the present books
of the New Testament. For Dr. Lardner
shews, that the former were not received
as divine in the churches of Christians,
nor alleged by different parties for the
decision of controversies, nor commented
on, nor translated, like the New Tes-
tament,

7. The Mishna was a collection of Jew-
ish traditions, which were committed to
writing by Rabbi Judah, about the middle
of the the second century. The Mishna
with the comments on it, makes the Tal-
muds;

Its truth confirmed by the Mishna and Tal. muds.

CHAP. ^{II} muds ; which books are highly revered by the Jews, and contain all the rites and doctrines of their religion. The Mishna and Talmuds, tho' blended with falshood, and malicious insinuations against Christ, refer to his nativity, relate his journey into Egypt, and ascribe his great works to the magic art which he learned in that country. It appears from the Talmuds, that Christ was put to death on the evening of the Passover, and that a crier went before him for forty days, making the following proclamation, " this man comes forth to be " stoned, because he dealt in forcery, and " persuaded and seduced Israel." However the acknowledgment of his wonderful works, of the success of his preaching, and of his suffering as a malefactor, is mixed with virulent aspersions on him and his followers. (s)

Its truth
confirmed
by Hea-
then wri-
ters of the
three first
centuries.

8. If we examine some Heathen authors in the early ages of Christianity, we shall find them acquainted with some facts re-

Lardner.

lative

lative to it or its professors. Tacitus, Mar-
tial, Juvenal, Suetonius, Pliny the younger, CHAP.
II.
Epictetus, Suidas, M. Antonius, Apuleius, Celsus, Lucian, Aristides, Galen and other Heathen writers of the two first centuries, bear testimony to several facts of the new Testament, to the persecutions of Nero and Domitian, to the patience and innocence of the Christians, to the propagation of the Gospel, and to several points relative to it and its professors. In the year of our Lord 68, a monument was erected to Nero in Portugal; (*t*) for clearing the country of robbers, and of men who taught a new kind of superstition. In the end of the first century, Tacitus (*u*) acquaints us with the death of Christ, the persecution of his followers under Nero, and the propagation of his religion in the country where he was crucified. Martial, (*w*) who lived in the last year of the first century, is supposed to refer to the fortitude of the Christians,

(*t*) Gruteri Inscript. p. 238, and Lardner's defence of it.

(*u*) Annal. xv. 44. (*w*) Epigram Lib. x. Ep. xxv.

CHAP.
II. in bearing their sufferings, rather than sacrifice to the gods. " You have perhaps
 " lately seen acted on the theatre, Mucius,
 " who thrust his hand into the fire ; if you
 " think such a person patient, valiant,
 " stout, you are a senseless dotard. For
 " it is a much greater thing, when threat-
 " ened with a troublesome coat to say, I do
 " not sacrifice, than to obey the command,
 " burn the hand." The troublesome coat
 or shirt of the Christians, was besmeared
 with pitch, wax or sulphur : and their
 chins were fastened to a stake fixed in the
 ground ; in order to keep them erect, like
 a burning torch. To this punishment,
 which was inflicted in the reign of Nero,
 Juvenal (x) seems to allude, in the following
 lines :

*Pone Tigellinan, tædâ lacebis in illâ
 Quâ stantes ardent qui fixo gutture fumant.*

Juvenal (y) speaks of the pitched shirt, and
 troublesome coat, in the following line ;

Ausi quod liceat tunica punire molesta :

(x) Sat. i. 155. (y) viii. 235 Edit. Delphini cum nota.

and

and in the note on this passage, we are ^{CHAP.} informed, that shocking crimes (but chief-^{II}ly setting fire to buildings) were punished in this way. In the Acts (z) we are informed that Claudius commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome; and Suetonius (a) assures us, that this emperor banished them for turbulence under Chrestus their leader. This historian affirms, (b) that Nero punished the Christians, for professing a new and magical superstition; and Pliny's letter (c) to Trajan A. D. 107, proves the Christians were known both to him and to his master. A. D. 109, Epictetus (d) speaking of intrepidity, especially with respect to a tyrant, asked the following question; "is it possible to arrive at this temper, and become indifferent to those things, from madness or habit like the Gallileans, and yet not know from reason and demonstration, that God made all things?" Suidas (e) observes, that in the time of the em-

(z) Acts xviii.

(a) In Claudio Cap. xxv.

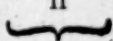
(b) In Nerone Cap. xvi. (c) Lib. x, Ep. xcvi.

(d) Arrien p. 400 Edit. Lond. 1670 Lib. iv. Cap. vii.

(e) Vox Naziraios.

CHAP. ^{II.} peror Claudius, the Nazarenes and Gallileans received a new name at Antioch, and were called Christians; and St. Luke makes the same observation in the Acts (*f*) of the apostles. A. D. 161 the Emperor M. Antonius the philosopher, thus expressed himself in the 11th book of his meditations (*g*):
 “What a soul is that which is prepared
 “even now, to be extinguished or dispersed,
 “or to subsist still? but this readiness must
 “proceed from a well weighed judgment,
 “not from mere obstinacy like the Christians. A. D. 164 Apuleius (*h*) a platonic philosopher, seemed to refer to the rites of the Christians, and to the opinions entertained of them by the Heathens. In his fable of the golden ass, he charges a woman with rising early to drink; in allusion to the Eucharist, which was celebrated early during the persecutions; with lewdness, as the Christian assemblies were in the night; and with robbing her husband, on account of the charities of the Christians. A. D.

(*f*) xi. 26.(*g*) Lib. xi. Sect. 3.(*h*) Metamorph. Lib. ix. p. 333.

176 Celsus, a learned Epicurean, referred to ^{CHAP.}
three of the Gospels, probably to that of ^{II} 
St. Mark, and to several epistles of St. Paul;
but did not insinuate that they were forged,
to do honour to Christ. We find in Celsus
(i) the whole history of the birth, life,
preaching, miracles, death and resurrection
as recorded in the Gospels; but he has
mentioned these and other matters, not as
believed by himself, but for the purpose of
refuting them. From his testimony it ap-
pears, that the Gospel was extant, and that
its doctrines and facts were believed by the
Christians of his time; nor does he deny
them to have been written in the age, in
which the facts were said to have been per-
formed. From Lucian's (k) account of
Peregrinus A. D. 176, it appears, that the
founder of Christianity was crucified, that
his followers hoped for immortality, des-
pised worldly enjoyments, bore afflictions
with fortitude, were men of truth and ho-
nesty, and highly distinguished by mutual

(i) Origen *passim*.

(k) *De morte Peregrini*.

CHAP. love.

II.

The same year, Aristides (1) the Sophist spoke of the wicked men of Palestine or of the Christians as Atheists, unprofitable and ignorant, who abused ancient religious establishments. A. D. 180, Galen (m) mentioned Christ, and alluded to his delivering his precepts in an unlogical way, and without any deduction of reasons, or arguments. He blames Archigenes for not giving a demonstration, nor even a probable reason for some things he advances; and observes, we seem to be rather in a school of Moses or Christ, where we must receive laws without any reason assigned. The acceptance of the laws of obscure persons, without argument or reasoning, is a strong proof of their divine commission, and of the truth of their religion. Dr. Lardner shews that the Christians or their tenets were known to Adrian and the Antonines, to Scapula, Vigillius, Satuminus, Cecilius, Capilla, Vepronius and Candidus, who were governors of provinces in the

(1) Vol. ii. p. 309 and Seq. Edit. Oxon. 1722.

(m) De Pulsuum differ. Lib. ii. p. 1011 Edit. Lugd. 1650

second century ; and also to Spartian, Ul-
pian, Dion Cassius, Porphyry, Hierocles CHAP.
II
and Julian, who wrote in the third and
fourth centuries. Julian admits the appear-
ance of a new star, after the birth of Christ;
but attempts to account for its appearance
in a natural way. Had there been any doubt
of the truth of the Gospels in the times of
Celsus, Porphyry and Julian, these learned
Heathens would have availed themselves of
it, to prove the falshood of the things rela-
ted in them. It is true, the writings of
Celsus and Porphyry are lost ; but we find
traces of their opinions or arguments, in
other authors, which have been transmit-
ted to us. The emperor Julian, whose
works are extant, is silent about any forgery
in the sacred writings ; tho' we can have
no doubt, of his having seen all the objec-
tions of Celsus and Porphyry who had writ-
ten before him.

9. Having proved the truth of the New
Testament from Pagan, Jewish, Christian
and Heretical authors ; we may be certain

Apostles
well infor-
med and
not decei-
ved in the
chief Gos-
pel facts.

CHAP. II as to the characters of the apostles and evangelists, to the life, doctrines and miracles of its author, to its rapid propagation, to the sufferings of its teachers, and to other particulars related in it. Each of these points, when distinctly considered, will furnish an additional proof or confirmation of the truth or divine authority of the Christian revelation. The books of the New Testament derive authority from the information, integrity, number, disinterestedness and consistency of the writers, and of the witnesses they appeal to. The apostles and Evangelists had full information relative to the miracles at the passion, to the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and to other important facts which they relate. They could not have been imposed on as to matters presented to their senses, and of which the ignorant could have judged as well as the learned and refined. Matthew was an apostle and eye-witness to those facts; Mark tho' not an apostle was acquainted with Peter and other eye-witnesses; and Luke, who was the companion of the apostles,

tles, says he had "a perfect understanding CHAP.
II.
"of all things from the very first." "That
"which was from the beginning," saith
John, "which we have heard, which we
"have seen with our eyes, which we have
"looked upon and our hands have handled
"of the word of life, declare we unto you."
Matthew informs us that at Christ's birth,
wise men came from the East to Jerusalem,
to worship the king of the Jews; and that
king Herod was so alarmed for his crown,
that he put to death all the males at Beth-
lehem under two years of age. The
slaughter of the innocents was a remark-
able fact; and many who were at Jerusa-
lem when the Evangelist wrote, must have
known it to be false, if it was so. An
Heathen writer (a) affirms that Herod put
to death the innocents and even his own
son; and that Augustus observed, it was
better to be the hog than the son of Herod.
The Evangelists affirm, that at the pas-
sion and death of Christ there was an extra-

(a) Macrob. Saturn ii. 34.

ordinary

CHAP. ^{II.} ordinary darkness, a terrible earthquake and other prodigies. Had these matters been false, they never could have been believed; as many who were in Jerusalem at the passion were alive when the Gospel was published, and ready to expose such relations as false, had they been so. If there was no darkness at the passion, a whole nation might have denied it; and a well grounded denial would have refuted Christianity more effectually, than the most subtle arguments. The darkness must have been miraculous; since Christ was crucified at the time of full moon, at which time an eclipse of the sun could not have happened; nor does an eclipse of the sun last longer than fifteen minutes. His appearance alive after his death was attested by many, who had seen, heard, or handled him; nor can we suppose that persons under such circumstances would have believed so extraordinary an event, if he had not risen from the dead. For his resurrection Paul appealed to five hundred witnesses, the majority of which were alive when he wrote to the
Corinthians;

Corinthians; and he was so confident of CHAP.
II.
the fact, that he declared his own preach-
ing to be vain if Christ did not rise. The
number of witnesses was sufficient to estab-
lish the fact, and more was unnecessary
and not to be expected: for if it should be
thought necessary that he should appear to
all the people of Jerusalem, the same reason
would hold for his appearing to the whole
Jewish nation, to all nations and to every in-
dividual of each nation (*b*). The disciples
could not have been mistaken relative to
Christ's miracles and ascension, which were
the objects of sense; and they must have
known, whether they could cure diseases
or speak languages which they had never
learned. According to the Gospels, Christ
not only wrought miracles himself, but im-
parted miraculous powers to his disciples
and followers. " And these signs shall
" follow them that believe; in my name
" they shall cast out devils, they shall speak
" with strange tongues, they shall take up
" serpents, and if they drink any deadly

(*c*) Mark xvi.

" thing

CHAP. "thing it shall not hurt them, they shall

II. "lay hands on the sick and they shall
 "recover" (c). The communication of miraculous powers by Christ to his followers was a remarkable fact, in which it was impossible they should have been deceived themselves, or have imposed on others; since they themselves and others must have known whether they possessed these powers or not. Upon the whole it appears, that the disciples could not have been deceived in matters of fact presented to their senses; in matters of fact which were many in number and various in kind. In the New Testament are many other extraordinary things, any one of which if proved false would have injured the credit of the Gospel, and stopped its progress more effectually than all the cavils and calumnies of its opponents. If those extraordinary facts were either false or unsupported by miracles, all the philosophers of Greece and Rome could not have obtained credit for them, much less poor and illi-

(c) Mark xvi.

terate

terate fishermen. Those facts happened in CHAP. II.
a small country where they might easily
have been refuted, and were related in a
few years after they were said to have hap-
pened. Hence the incredulous might have
received intelligence of those things by en-
quiry; in which they were assisted by the
Evangelists who are commonly very parti-
cular as to times, places, persons and cir-
cumstances,

10. And as the apostles and evangelists Apostles
and evan-
gelists ho-
nest and
candid.
were not likely to be imposed on in plain
facts presented to their senses; so their
writings and actions leave no room for sus-
pecting them of imposture. They forbid
sin in thought, word or deed, required
men to speak truth one to another, and
threatened damnation to him who loves or
makes a lie. It is absurd to suppose, that
men whose religion was a forgery would
threaten liars, or that the advocates of vir-
tue should die martyrs to falshood. The
Evangelists spoke of the virtues of their
master, not as panegyrist; but briefly and
incidentally

CHAP. incidentally, and as those virtues happened
 II. to be connected with matters which seemed
 to be the chief object of their history. They did not write to extend their own fame; since they say little or nothing about their own virtues or abilities. Little is said of Matthew, and hardly any thing to his praise; and they are totally silent about Mark and Luke. They do not conceal John the Baptist's doubt concerning Christ's character (*d*), Christ's working few miracles in his own country (*e*), many of his disciples quitting him on account of the obscurity of his doctrines (*f*), and other things which forgers would have suppressed, as evidently tending to injure their cause. They frankly relate the ambition and other weaknesses of the apostles, and some things which seem to imply timidity or despair in their master. They conceal not his obscure birth, scourgings and ignominious death, nor their own meanness and illiterateness, nor the rebukes they received for want of

(*d*) Matth. xi, 2. Luke vii, 18. (*e*) Matth. xiii, 58.

(*f*) John vi, 66,

faith,

faith, nor their contests for precedence, CHAP.
nor their cowardice in dangers, nor the II.
contempt in which they were held, nor
their unsuccessful attempts to work miracles, and to convert men by their preaching. The book of the Acts does not exaggerate the sufferings of the apostles, nor magnify their patience; but fairly tells when the church had rest and when the people joined them, as well as when they were threatened, beaten or put to death. In no instance have the Apostles or Evangelists been convicted of alleging a falsehood, of retracting any thing, or of contradicting each other. The latter relate extraordinary events in the plainest manner, do not seem to suspect the truth of their own relations, or the incredulity of their readers, nor attempt art or eloquence to reconcile men to what appears marvellous or mysterious in their narratives. Knowing that truth is supported without sophistry or ornament, they had no recourse to either; but related naked facts, and left every man to make his own reflections on them.

10. The

CHAP.
II.

The apostles were free from enthusiasm.

II. The apostles did not resemble either ancient or modern enthusiasts, in their doctrines or practices. The priests of Baal cut themselves with knives or lancets; and those of Bellona drew blood from themselves, and sprinkled it on the idol. The ancient Egyptians scourged themselves with rods; and the Romans at their Lupercalia, marched through the streets naked, beating themselves with whips (*a*). The Nympholepti of the Greeks, and the Lymphatici of the Romans fancied they saw some deity or nymph which threw them into convulsions (*b*); and the Curetes, Corybantes, Galli, Idai Dactyli, and the Salii were extravagant in their opinions and conduct, danced in armour, made a confused noise with musical instruments, howled like madmen and cut themselves as they marched in solemn procession (*c*). The

(*a*) Polyd. Vergil de Invent. Lib. vii, Cap. 6.

(*b*) See Livy, Lib. xxxix. See also Steph. Thesaurus Art Nympholepti & Lymphatici.

(*c*) Dion. Hall. Antiq. Lib. ii. & Apul. Metam. Lib. viii. p. 258. Edit. Basil.

chief

chief enthusiasts, since the promulgation CHAP.
II.
of the Gospel, were the Montanists of the }
second century, the Crusaders of the eleventh, the German Anabaptists of the sixteenth, and those of England in the seventeenth century. Montanus, a gloomy and austere heretic, fancied the Gospel was too indulgent to human infirmities, and that he himself was sent to render it more perfect. For this purpose he and his followers enjoined rigid fasts, forbade second marriages, refused absolution to such as had been once guilty of great sins, &c. &c. But it should be considered, that those melancholy enthusiasts taught and acted conformably to their ancient ideas carried to excess; whereas the apostles must have had strong evidence, to induce them to act contrary to their ancient principles and habits. Nor was there any resemblance between the motives or conduct of the Apostles and Crusaders; the former of which were pious and moral; while the latter committed many outrages. The enthusiasm of the Crusaders was founded on
their

CHAP. ^{II.} their hatred of unbelievers, on the spirit of chivalry which prevailed in the eleventh century, and on advantages derived from those holy wars by princes and ecclesiastics; whereas the apostles propagated doctrines injurious to their followers, and subversive of their ancient habits and prejudices. The Apostles differed also in their principles and conduct from the Enthusiasts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The former did not meddle with property, and enjoined allegiance and the payment of tribute; while the German Anabaptists of the sixteenth century desired an equality of property and power, the deposition of princes who refused to restore liberty and reform religion, and the abolition of taxes. The latter actually deposed magistrates; whereas the former obeyed the laws and never invaded the property of others. The Fanatics of England were nearly the same as in Germany, in their doctrines and practices. Several of the English enthusiasts maintained, that the saints had a right to seize on the property of the ungodly; while

while the Apostles thought it the duty of ^{CHAP.} _{II.} saints to renounce every thing, for the sake of the Gospel. The former in the midst of their extravagancies seldom forgot their temporal interest; while the latter paid little attention to the affairs of this world. The former were puffed up with pride; whereas humility and firmness were the distinguishing characteristics of the first heralds of the Gospel. Most of the German and English enthusiasts were ambitious of wealth or power; whereas the Apostles expressed a contempt for both by their words and actions. In short, those enthusiasts maintained absurd, impolitic, or selfish opinions; whereas the Apostles though zealous were moderate and steady, and preached the most useful system of religion and morality that ever was devised. Had the Apostles been as extravagant as any ancient or modern enthusiasts, they could not have been mistaken as to the facts on which their religion was founded. For though enthusiasts entertain erroneous *opinions*, they see, hear and feel like other men :

CHAP. men: nor could they have been mistaken
 II. in respect to Christ's miracles, resurrection
 and ascension which they saw with their
 eyes. Enthusiasts might sacrifice their lives
 in support of *false notions* which they be-
 lieved to be true; but not in attestation of
false facts, which produced neither pleasure
 nor advantage.

The apos-
 tles were
 free from
 worldly
 ambition.

12. Nor were the Apostles instigated by
 worldly ambition, to preach the Gospel.
 While Christ was alive, his disciples
 thought he was to be a temporal prince,
 and aspired to honour like mere men of the
 world; but after his death, they despised
 this world with all its pleasures or advan-
 tages. The ambition of being the founders
 of sects might prompt men to alter or re-
 form their religious or moral systems; but
 this could not have been the case with the
 Apostles, who never pretended to be ori-
 ginals, but referred every thing to the cru-
 cified Jesus, whom they considered as the
 founder of their religion. Men might fol-
 low.

low a living impostor, not knowing him CHAP.
II.
to be such; but there is no instance of their {
worshipping a dead one, who deluded them
by promises which he could not fulfil. It
was natural for low and ignorant persons
to be ambitious of fame in their own small
circle; but unnatural and unlikely that
such men should aspire to change the reli-
gions of all nations, or encounter difficul-
ties to establish a forgery. Since then the
Apostles and Evangelists were well in-
formed, candid, honest, and free from en-
thusiasm and ambition; there can be no
just cause for suspecting the truth of their
accounts.

13. Having proved the truth of the Divine
New Testament from testimonies, and authority
from the information, integrity and can- of Chris-
dour of its authors and first preachers; we tianity
may conclude that Christ wrought miracles proved
and that his religion is divine. But besides from the
miracles
of its
author.
those proofs of the reality of miracles, the
following observations leave no room for
suspecting that they were not performed.

G

The

CHAP. ^{II.} The chief miracles ascribed to Christ by the Scriptures were, his converting water into wine, multiplying a few loaves and fishes, discerning men's thoughts, commanding the winds, and the waves, raising the dead, curing sometimes by a word, or a touch, and sometimes in an instant, or at a distance from the patient, the darkness at the passion, and the appearance of some who had been dead. These are extraordinary events, and if false must have exposed the persons who preached, and the books which related them, to ridicule and contempt. Those miracles are said to have been performed publickly in Jerusalem, and in all parts of Judea and Galilee, in cities and villages, in the streets, and in private houses, in the presence of Jews and Heathens, of Scribes and Pharisees. Every man must have known the falshood of some of those relations; and the detection, of falshood in a few instances would have subverted the whole Gospel. At present those extraordinary events stagger the faith of many Christians, who have not examined the

the evidences of Christianity; nor could they have been believed at first either by Jews or Heathens, had they not been true. In the infancy of Christianity, such relations, if groundless, would have prevented any man from quitting his own religion; and had they been fabricated in after ages, they never could have been believed, since the reply would have been, we never heard of them before. The Gospel, by mentioning the places where, and the persons on whom and before whom miracles were performed, assisted unbelievers in proving it to be false if it was so; and Christ's injunction to his disciples, and his promise to their converts must have convicted him of imposture, had he been guilty of it. He enjoined his disciples to "heal the sick, to cleanse lepers, to raise the dead, and to cast out devils" (e); and he promised the following signs to those, who believed: "in my name they shall cast out devils, speak with strange tongues, take up serpents, and if they drink any

(e) *Matth. x.*

CHAP. "deadly thing it shall not hurt them, they

II.
 ~~~~~

"shall lay hands on the sick and they shall  
 "recover" (*f*). If the disciples did not  
 exercise these powers, every convert must  
 have known the falshood of such promises;  
 and if *they* exercised them, we can not  
 doubt but their master did so. But the  
 following observations evince, that the first  
 Christians actually exercised these powers  
 soon after his death. Paul (*g*) acquainted  
 the Christians of Corinth that "God hath  
 "set in the Church, first apostles, secondly  
 "prophets, thirdly teachers, after that mi-  
 "racles, the gifts of healing, &c.;" and  
 would not have ventured to ascribe the  
 power of working miracles to an entire  
 society, if none of them possessed it. "O  
 "foolish Galatians," saith Paul, (*h*) "he  
 "that ministereth to you the Spirit and  
 "worketh miracles among you, doeth he  
 "it by the works of the law or the hearing  
 "of faith?" We can not suppose the  
 apostle would have taken for granted that

(*f*) Mark xvi.

(*g*) 1 Cor. xii.

(*h*) Gal. iii.

miracles

miracles were wrought, or censured the CHAP.  
Galatians so severely, had they been able to <sup>II.</sup> }  
contradict his assertion. Even the Jews  
and Heathens allowed the miracles of  
Christ; but ascribed them to various causes,  
denied them to be proofs of his divinity,  
or maintained them to be inferior to the  
miracles of the Pagans. On one occasion  
the Jews charged him with healing on the  
Sabbath, on another imputed his miracles  
to Beelzebub, and on a third, acknow-  
ledged that he saved others, while they re-  
proached him with not being able to save  
himself. Celsus (*k*) who personated a Jew,  
admits that Christ wrought miracles, but  
ascribes them to a juggle, and insinuates  
that they were as illfounded as those of the  
Heathens; the falshood of which insinua-  
tion will fully appear in the third chapter  
(*l*) of this treatise. According to Celsus,  
(*m*) Christ learned magic in Egypt, and  
on his return home, pretended to be a God  
on account of his miracles. The Jerusalem

(*k*) Orig. Lib. ii, p. 394, Edit. Paris 1733, & lib. iii, p. 449.

(*l*) Sect. vi, vii, viii, ix.

(*m*) Ib. lib. i, p. 449.

Talmud,

CHAP. Talmud, though blended with malicious  
 II. insinuations against Jesus, admits that a  
 child was cured in his name (*x*). The  
 modern Jews acknowledged his miracles;  
 though they imputed them to a juggle, or  
 to the ineffable name of Jehovah which he  
 stole out of the temple (*n*). The Heathen  
 in Lucian (*o*) spoke of the Syrian of Pa-  
 lestine, who had cured for rewards persons  
 troubled with lunacy, convulsions and  
 other disorders. Hierocles (*i*) allowed the  
 miracles of Christ, and that he was beloved  
 by the Gods; but denied him to have been  
 a God, and set up Apollonius as his equal  
 or superior. According to the emperor  
 Julian (*k*), Jesus never performed any thing  
 memorable except healing the blind, and  
 the lame, and curing demoniacs in Beth-  
 saida and Bethany. Volusian, a learned  
 Heathen in his correspondence with St.  
 Austin (*l*), denies that there were sufficient

(*x*) Lardner, vol. viii. (*n*) Bafnage Hist. book iv, ch.  
 128, sect. 7. (*o*) Philopseudes p. 833, Edit. Lut 1515.

(*i*) Lact. lib. v, cap. 3, & Euseb. adv. Hieroclem lib. i.

(*k*) Cyril. ado. Julian. lib. vi, p. 191 vol. vi, Edit. Lut. 1638.

(*l*) Epist. cxxxv.

proofs of Christ's divinity; since healing CHAP. II.  
the leprosy, curing the sick and raising the  
dead were small matters to be performed by  
the Deity. In all these cases the enemies of  
the Gospel acknowledged his miraculous  
power; and we desire no more, regardless of  
the causes to which they ascribed it.

14. The fulfilment of certain predictions By the accomplishment of certain predictions of Christ.  
uttered by Jesus, was another miracle,  
which proves him a true prophet and com-  
missioned by God. Some prophecies were  
fulfilled for the use of the first believers,  
in a few days or weeks after they were ut-  
tered, others in forty years, and some in  
several centuries after the Gospel was pro-  
mulgated. Christ foretold not only the  
treachery of Judas, the denial of Peter, the  
desertion of the apostles, his own death,  
resurrection and other events recorded in  
the Gospels, but some events which were  
accomplished after the publication of the  
Gospels. From the twenty-third and twenty-  
fourth chapters of St. Matthew, the  
thirteenth of St. Mark, and the twenty-  
third



CHAP. <sup>II.</sup> third of St. Luke it appears, that Christ  
 { predicted many important events, which  
 were to happen before the end of that ge-  
 neration, and before the destruction of Je-  
 rusalem. The most remarkable of these  
 events were the appearance of false prophets,  
 the propagation of the Gospel, the trials of  
 its professors, famines, pestilences, earth-  
 quakes, wars, and commotions in various  
 places. Jesus declared that these things  
 shall come to pass before the end of that ge-  
 neration; and it appears (*m*) that his predic-  
 tions were accomplished in due time. But  
 of all his prophecies none was more re-  
 markable or more completely fulfilled, than  
 that which related to the Jewish war, and  
 the destruction of Jerusalem. In order to  
 understand the cause of this war and the  
 destruction of this city; it may be necessary  
 to premise the following observations. Ju-  
 dea was reduced to a Roman province sixty-  
 three years before the birth of Christ; but  
 the Jews enjoyed the freedom of their reli-

(*m*) See Sherlock and Newton on prophecy.

gion and other privileges, under the Roman <sup>CHAP.</sup> governors. When Jesus was born the Jews <sup>II.</sup> were in this state; and it was by their importunity that he was put to death, by Pontius Pilate the Roman governor in Judea. About that time, and for some years after, the Jews expected a Messiah to rescue them from subjection; which expectation prompted them to revolt against the Romans in the reign of Nero, and in the sixtieth year of the Christian æra. Vespasian, who was sent against them by Nero, reduced all the cities of Judea except Jerusalem; and this general, who succeeded Nero on the throne, dispatched his son Titus to terminate the war. In the year of Christ 70, Titus besieged Jerusalem, took it after a long siege, destroyed and plundered it, demolished its temple, slew or sold the inhabitants, and sent some to Egypt to work in the mines. When the Roman legions besieged Jerusalem, it was full of persons who came thither from all parts to the feast of the Passover: and multitudes were destroyed by plague, famine, or civil dissention.

CHAP. dissention. “The whole nation,” says  
 II. Josephus, “was shut up as in a prison;  
 “and the Roman army encompassed the  
 “city, when it was crowded with inha-  
 “bitants. Accordingly, the multitude of  
 “those who perished therein exceed all the  
 “destruction that men or God ever brought  
 “on mortals.” About forty years before  
 the destruction of Jerusalem, Christ fore-  
 told the siege in the following words:  
 “The days shall come upon thee that thine  
 “enemies shall cast a trench about thee,  
 “and compass thee round and keep thee  
 “in on every side.” He thus passed sen-  
 tence of desolation on the temple with an  
 affectionate severity: “O Jerusalem, Je-  
 “rusalem (*m*) thou that killest the prophets  
 “and stonest them which are sent unto  
 “thee, how often would I have gathered  
 “thy children together, even as a hen ga-  
 “thereth her chickens and ye would not?  
 “Behold your house is left unto you de-  
 “solate.” In consequence of this predic-  
 tion, his disciples shewed him the building

(*m*) Matth. xxiii.

of

of the temple; lamenting no doubt the destruction of so magnificent an edifice. CHAP.  
II.

The stones were of an incredible size, and the structure so likely to last for ages, that they thus addressed him, "See what manner of stones and what buildings are here. " And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these stones? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." This prophecy was literally fulfilled; for when Jerusalem was taken by the Romans after a long siege, Terentius Rufus, who was left there by Titus to command the army, tore up the very foundation of the temple with a ploughshare. The Romans also burned and demolished the city, dug it up in quest of treasures, and so levelled its foundation, that some have questioned its ancient magnificence. Only three towers were left, as standing monuments of the strength of the city; and part of the wall to serve as barracks for those who were left there in garrison. Eleven hundred thousand perished during  
the



CHAP. the siege; ninety-seven thousand were made  
<sup>II</sup>  
captive during the war; and the descendants of those who survived the siege have been dispersed among all nations from that time to the present, according to the prediction of the prophets. Christ wept at the distant view of the calamities which threatened his country, and said to the woman, who lamented him as he was led to execution: “daughters of Jerusalem  
“weep not for me but weep for yourselves  
“and for your children. For behold the  
“days are coming in which they shall say,  
“blessed are the barren and the wombs that  
“never bare and the paps which never gave  
“suck.” He denounced woe to “them  
“that are withchild, and unto them  
“that give suck in those days;” as the former were unable to fly, and the latter to endure the hardships of the siege. The famine was so severe, that mothers snatched the food out of the mouths of their children, and some even devoured their own children; nor is it possible to  
read

read in Josephus these particulars without CHAP.  
shuddering at the relation. Christ's predic- <sup>II.</sup>  
tions of the miseries of his countrymen  
were frequent and solemn; he warned his  
disciples to anticipate the siege by flight;  
“for then shall be great tribulation such  
“as was not from the beginning of the  
“world to this time, nor ever shall be.”  
Agreeably to this prediction, Josephus ob-  
serves that no other city ever suffered such  
things; as no other generation from the  
beginning of the world was so fruitful of  
wickedness. Jesus told the signs by which  
the Jews might discern the calamities which  
threatened them; and urges them to “fly  
“to the mountains when they shall see the  
“abomination of desolation stand in the  
“holy place.” The Jews counted a cer-  
tain space of ground round the city holy,  
and called every idol, or image of a man,  
an abomination; and the Roman army  
with its ensigns, and images was stiled the  
abomination, which was to desolate and  
lay waste Jerusalem. That they may fly  
quickly, he forbade him who “was on the  
“house

CHAP. <sup>II.</sup> "house top to come down to take any thing out of his house." In the ancient great cities the roofs of the houses were flat; and they had stairs on the outside, by which they ascended and descended without coming into the house. The flat-roofed houses usually formed continued terraces, from one end of the city to another; and these terraces terminated at the gates of the cities. He who was regaling himself on the housetop was prohibited to take any thing out of his house; but to fly along the tops of the houses and escape out of the city. Having been asked by his disciples, about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem; he replied, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass 'till all these things be fulfilled." We find this prediction verified by the event; and the event confirmed by Jewish and Heathen authors. Suetonius mentions the cause and issue of the Jewish war; Tacitus and Josephus agree nearly in respect to the conquest of the Jews by the Romans: Dion Cassius bears testimony to the destruction of the city

city and temple of Jerusalem by Titus; CHAP.  
and all of them are independent witnesses <sup>II.</sup> of the fulfilment of Christ's prophecies relative to Jerusalem. The history of Josephus, who was a zealous Jew, is the best comment on the prophecies concerning the destruction of this city; as he was present at the siege, and can not be suspected of falshood to favour the Christians. None but the disposer of events could have foreseen the rebellion of the Jews, the fate of the city and temple; as it was improbable that the Jews would have resisted Rome, the terror of nations; or that the Romans, who were gentle to the conquered, would with Gothic fierceness, have destroyed an ancient city and famous temple which were the chief ornaments of the province. The following observations evince that the prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem were delivered before the event. The ancients concur in assigning to the three first gospels a date prior to its destruction (x); and the common length of human

(x) Lardner.



CHAP. <sup>II.</sup> life renders it probable that they were written before that event. Jerusalem having been destroyed in seventy years after the birth of Christ; it is probable that Matthew his immediate companion, and Mark and Luke the associates of his companions were too far advanced in life to write after the destruction of that city. Artless men like the evangelists were unlikely to deliver prophecies after they were fulfilled; and if artful men attempted it, it is probable they would have dropped some hint to induce men to think they delivered them beforehand, or have described the enemy, the general or the emperor who was concerned against the Jews (y). Had those prophecies been published after its destruction, they who survived would doubtless have said; would to God they had been delivered before the siege, for then we would have availed ourselves of their warning and fled. The Christians who remembered the caution of Jesus, fled from

(y) Paley's Evidences, Part ii, Chap. 1.

Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, and escaped the calamities experienced by persons who disregarded his predictions. Before the siege, the Christians were numerous in Jerusalem; yet we do not learn from Josephus that any of them perished there; though he enumerates all the other sects and parties which were in the city during the siege. Since then it is probable they fled from Jerusalem in consequence of the Gospel predictions; these predictions must have been prior to the destruction of the city. Nor should we be surprised that the destruction of Jerusalem should be foretold by Christ; since some prophecies of his apostles have been accomplished many ages after they were delivered, and are fulfilling this day in every part of Christendom. The clearest of these prophecies relate to an apostacy, of which St. Paul (a) gives the following account: “ In the latter times some shall  
“ depart from the faith—speaking lies in  
“ hypocrisy—forbidding to marry, and  
“ commanding to abstain from meats

(a) 1 Tim. iv.

H

“ which

CHAP. II. “ which God hath created to be received  
 { “ with thanksgiving.” In another epistle he thus describes the apostate condition of some professors of Christianity (b): “ the  
 “ time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own  
 “ lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall  
 “ turn away their ears from the truth, and  
 “ shall be turned unto fables.” These predictions have been actually fulfilled by the professors of the Gospel, who believed and practised several erroneous doctrines and acts unauthorised by the Scriptures.

Its truth  
 confirmed  
 by its rapid  
 propagation.

15. The success of the gospel will appear truly miraculous, if we consider the opposition it met with, and the mean persons, by which it was propagated. The Apostles had no arms to conquer, no authority to compel, no money to bribe, no learning to convince, and no eloquence to persuade men to embrace their religion.

(b) 2 Tim. iv.

They

They were not only destitute of these aids, CHAP.  
but encountered the fury of the populace, <sup>II.</sup>  
the zeal of bigots, the interest of priests,  
the vices of the wicked, the power of  
rulers, the policy of statesmen, and the  
learning and pride of philosophers and  
rabbies: and that a religion should pre-  
vail in spite of all these obstacles, is truly  
miraculous. Both sacred and profane au-  
thors bear testimony to the rapid propa-  
gation of the Gospel, after the death of its  
author. In a few days after the ascension  
there were at Jerusalem about 120 Disci-  
ples (a); on the day of Pentecost which  
was ten days after it, there were added to  
them about 3000 souls (b), and soon af-  
ter the number of the men was about  
5000 (c.) After this we are told that mul-  
“titudes of believers both of men and wo-  
“men were added to the Lord,” that “the  
“number of the Disciples multiplied in Jeru-  
“salem greatly,” and that “a great com-  
“pany of priests were obedient to the

(a) Acts, i. 5.

(b) ii. 41.

(c) iv. 4.



CHAP. "faith (*d*):" and all this in less than  
 11 two years after the ascension (*e*). In about  
 seven years (*f*) after, the Gospel was  
 preached to the Gentiles in Cæsarea; and  
 in a year (*g*) after this, a great number  
 of them was converted at Antioch. The  
 words of the historian are (*h*), "a great  
 " number believed and turned to the Lord  
 "—much people was added unto the  
 " Lord."—The apostles Barnabas and Paul  
 " taught much people." On the death of  
 Herod, which happened the next year (*i*),  
 we are told that "the word of God grew  
 " and multiplied (*k*). In three years af-  
 ter this, when Paul preached at Iconium,  
 a great many both of Jews and Greeks  
 believed (*l*); and he afterwards had many  
 Disciples at Derbe a city of Lycaonia. In  
 three years after this, or in sixteen years  
 after the ascension, Paul found the Gentile  
 converts of Antioch, Syria and Celicia  
 " established in the faith, and encreasing

(*d*) Acts, v. & vi.      (*e*) Benson's Hist. of propagation of  
 Christianity.      (*f*) Ib.      (*g*) Ib.      (*h*) Acts xi.  
 (*i*) Benson Ib.      (*k*) Acts xii. 24.      (*l*) xiv. 1.

“in number daily (*m*).” In Thessalonica CHAP  
 some of the Jews believed, and of the de- II.  
 vout Greeks a great multitude (*n*); and  
 at Berea many of the Jews believed (*o*).  
 At Corinth many believed and were bap-  
 tized (*p*); and the words “so mightily  
 “grew the word and prevailed (*q*);”  
 prove the success of St. Paul at Ephesus.  
 Demetrius complained that “throughout  
 “all Asia this Paul hath persuaded and  
 “turned away much people (*r*);” and  
 the epistles of Paul prove that churches  
 were established in Rome, Corinth, Galatia,  
 Philippi, Colosse, Ephesus and Thessaloni-  
 ca. This Apostle refers to the churches  
 of Judea, of Asia, and to all the churches  
 of the Gentiles (*s*); and declares that from  
 “Jerusalem and round about unto Illyri-  
 “cum he fully preached the gospel of  
 “Christ (*t*).” Upon the whole it appears  
 from the Acts and Epistles that in less

(*m*) Benson & Acts xvi. 5.    (*n*) xvii. 4.    (*o*) xvii. 12.

(*p*) xviii. 1.    (*q*) xix. 20.    (*r*) xix. 26.

(*s*) 1. Thes. xi. 14.    Rom. xvi. 19.    (*t*) xv. 19.

than

CHAP. II. than thirty years after the ascension, Christianity was spread thro' Judea, Galilee, Samaria, Rome, Alexandria, Athens, Cyprus, Cyrene, Macedonia, Philippi, Antioch, Joppa, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Berea, Iconium, Derbe, Lydda, Saron, Tyre, Cæsarea, Troas, Lystra, Damascus, Phrygia, Galatia, the Sea coast of Africa and other places. We are indebted for information on the progress of the Gospel in those places, more to incident or occasion, than to any design in the sacred writers to magnify the converts. The book of the Acts is totally silent about some of the Apostles, and about the number of the converts at Philippi, Galatia, and other places where Christianity was planted: nor is it likely that we should know any thing of their number in many places, were it not for incidents which made it necessary for the historian to mention them. The chief of those incidents were the murmuring of the Grecian converts, the rest from persecution, Herod's death, "the sending of Barnabas to Antioch

“tioch, Barnabas calling Paul to his assist- CHAP.  
“tance, Paul coming to a place and find- II.  
“ing there disciples, the clamour of the  
“Jews, and the complaint of the arti-  
“ficers interested in supporting the popular  
“religion, &c. Had it not been for these  
“occasions, it is probable that no notice  
“whatever would have been taken of the  
“number of converts in several of the  
“passages in which that notice now ap-  
“pears” (u). We are also furnished with  
material evidence of the propagation of the  
Gospel by Heathen writers, but chiefly by  
Tacitus (w) and Pliny the younger (x).  
According to the former, Christianity took  
its rise in Jerusalem, spread itself through  
Judea and reached Rome; and this writer  
assures us that in Nero’s reign, which was  
about thirty years after the crucifixion, a  
vast multitude of Christians were seized on  
and persecuted in Rome, a city distant  
from Jerusalem above two thousand miles.  
In eighty years after the crucifixion, Pliny  
acquainted the emperor Trajan, that the

(u) Paley’s Evidences, Part ii. Ch. 9.

(w) Annal. xv, 44.

(x) Lib. x. Epist. xcvi.



CHAP. <sup>II</sup> Gospel had so far prevailed in Bithynia, that the Heathen temples were almost deserted, and beasts brought to market for sacrifice, found few bidders: nor has any reason been assigned why they should be less numerous in other parts of the Roman empire. Pliny, who was grieved at the apostacy of the Heathens, persecuted the Christians; and some who were accused to him of being Christians, said they had renounced Christianity twenty years before. Hence it appears that there were Christians in Bithynia, in sixty years after our Saviour's passion; and there must have been some of them in that province before that period, if we may judge from their numbers in Pliny's time. Yet from Jerusalem to Bithynia was above 1200 miles; and to arrive at this province, the Apostles must have travelled through Syria, Pamphilia, Caria, Lycia and through other nations differing in language, in each of which they no doubt made many converts. Had not Tacitus been writing the life of Nero, we should probably know nothing of the number of Christians

Christians in Rome in the reign of this CHAP.  
II.  
emperor; had not Pliny been a Heathen priest, it is likely we should never hear of the number of Christians whom he persecuted in Bithynia, from a zeal for his religion. From the countries of some who wrote in the first and second centuries, we may judge that Christianity was then extensively propagated. Polycarp was of Smyrna, Justin Martyr of Syria Palestina, Irenæus of Lyons, Athenagoras of Athens, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian of Assyria, and Tertullian of Africa. Justin Martyr (y) and Tertullian (z) bear testimony to the extensive propagation of the Gospel among rude and civilized nations; and the Christians were so numerous in the time of Constantine, that some have imagined he established their religion upon that account. Such was the success of mean and illiterate persons; and there were excellent reasons why the preachers of the Gospel were poor and ignorant. Had Christ chosen princes or rich men to pro-

(y) Dial. cum Tryphone. (z) Apol. cap. xxxvii.  
Ad Judæos cap. vii. Ad Scapulem cap. iii.

CHAP.  
II.

pagate his religion, their success would doubtless be attributed to their authority, or power of rewarding their followers. Had he chosen orators or philosophers, the success of the Gospel would doubtless be ascribed to their eloquence or learning; and the heroism and self-denial of the Christians, might be supposed to arise from the dogmas of their philosophy. But by making choice of poor and insignificant persons; we have a moral demonstration, that the success of the Gospel is to be ascribed to God, and not to man. The Gospel it is true was rejected by many; but the conversion of one Jew or Heathen to a persecuted religion, was more extraordinary than the rejection of it by thousands who were governed by their prejudices. The success of Christianity must appear wonderful, if we consider the difficulty of conquering men's prejudices, and making converts this day among the Jews or Gentiles. The modern missionaries, though pious and learned, have had but little success among the Heathens; and as to the Jews, there is reason to think that more of them have been

converted in one day by the poor and ignorant Apostles, than have been won over <sup>CHAP.</sup> <sub>II</sub> in the last thousand years (a), by the clergy who have been respectable in fortune and information. Hence it appears that the Apostles possessed some mode of making proselytes to which the moderns were strangers; which mode could be nothing else but the power of working miracles. Mahomet, it is true, made many converts without miraculous powers; but surely they were compelled by his arms, allured by his prosperity or enticed by the promise of carnal indulgences. The followers of Christ, though persecuted, were soon dispersed in the most remote regions of the earth; while the proselytes of the Arabian impostor were confined to the nations that were conquered by him and his successors. For three hundred years no force was employed in disseminating the Gospel; whereas the Koran owed its origin, progress and establishment entirely to the sword. I entirely agree with Dr. Priestly

(a) Bryant on the truth of Christianity.

that



CHAP. that " the books called the Gospels were

II.

" not the *cause* but the *effect* of the belief of  
" Christianity in the first ages. For Chris-  
" tianity had been propagated with great  
" success long before those books were  
" written ; nor had the publication of  
" them any particular effect in adding to  
" the number of Christian converts. Chris-  
" tians received the books, because they  
" knew beforehand that the contents of  
" them were true ; and they were at that  
" time of no further use than to ascertain  
" and fix the testimony of living witnesses,  
" in order to its being transmitted without  
" variation to succeeding ages. For what  
" could have been the *preaching of the*  
" *Gospel* originally, but a recital of the  
" discourses and miracles of Christ, by  
" those who were eye-witnesses of them, to  
" those who were not ? The Gospels there-  
" fore contain the substance of all their  
" preaching. While the eyewitnesses were  
" living there was little occasion for books ;  
" and accordingly no histories were writ-  
" ten 'till about thirty years after the as-

" cension

“ cension of Christ, when the eyewitnesses CHAP.  
“ were going off the stage, and conse- II.  
“ quently when their testimony, without  
“ being secured by writing could not have  
“ been known with certainty, or trans-  
“ mitted to future ages. This was the  
“ natural and the actual progress of things  
“ in the primitive times.—Unbelievers in  
“ Christianity prove nothing against it,  
“ unless they can prove it did not make  
“ the progress it is said to have made while  
“ the facts were recent, or that the cir-  
“ cumstances in which it was propagated  
“ were materially different from what is  
“ commonly apprehended; as that the ci-  
“ vil power did not oppose its propagation,  
“ so that there was no persecution of Chris-  
“ tians, nothing to lead its friends or its  
“ enemies to enquire into the evidence of  
“ the facts while they were recent. But  
“ the history of those times is so well  
“ known, that this is clearly out of any  
“ man’s power, and must be so to the end  
“ of time, while any history of the first  
“ and second centuries shall exist.”

## CHAP.

## II.

By the  
sufferings  
of its  
preachers.

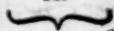
16. The religion of Christ being contrary to the pride, prejudices and policy of the Jews and Gentiles; we may reasonably expect, that he and its preachers would be persecuted; nor are we disappointed in our expectations. We find his sufferings and those of his followers asserted, supposed, alluded or referred to in the four Gospels, in the book of the Acts, in the Epistles, and in the writings of the Heathens, and the frequent exhortations to patience prove there was occasion for the exercise of this virtue. Tacitus (*a*) observes that Christ was put to death when Pontius Pilate was governor, that soon after his death his religion broke out again in Judea, and that a vast multitude of his followers were persecuted in Rome in the reign of Nero. We have also the testimony of Suetonius (*b*) that the Christiani were persecuted by this emperor; Pliny (*c*) the younger asserts that they were treated with asperity in Bythynia, in the reign of Trajan; and their sufferings

(*a*) Annal. xv, 44.

(*b*) In Nerone cap. xvi.

(*c*) Lib. x. Epist. xcvi.

are

are probably glanced at, though but briefly CHAP.  
II.  
and incidentally, by Juvenal, Martial,   
Epictetus, and other Heathen authors (x).

“ The conversion of multitudes to a reli-  
“ gion which exposed them to sufferings,  
“ is a strong confirmation of the truth of  
“ it. We all naturally love friends, rela-  
“ tions, reputation, liberty, ease and quiet,  
“ food and raiment and life: nor is it rea-  
“ sonable to suppose that a man will re-  
“ nounce all these, unless he has evidence  
“ that God requires it and will reward  
“ him. The conversion of so many who  
“ laid down their lives for Christ, abounds  
“ with proofs of the truth of the Gospel.  
“ Their courage and constancy in enduring  
“ all that human nature shuns and fears, is  
“ astonishing: Even women and young  
“ people suffered with unshaken resolution,  
“ tortures which we cannot read of with-  
“ out horror: and there is just cause to  
“ think that the divine Spirit enabled them  
“ to bear in this manner what they bore  
“ for his sake” (d). The apostles who

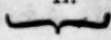
(x) See Sect. viii of this ch.

(d) Jortin's Discourses, ii.

were



CHAP. were cowardly, while Christ was alive,  
<sup>II.</sup>  
boldly inveighed against his murderers when he was dead; while no friend of Socrates durst appear at the Areopagus to accuse those who had unjustly murdered him. Even Plato was afraid to defend him, and disguised his sentiments under feigned names. To avoid the fate of Socrates, he said and unsaid, and contradicted himself; while the followers of Christ boldly defended their master, even unto death. Simple and ignorant apostles endured tortures and disgrace in defence of a *new* religion; while Socrates, Plato and Cicero, wanted courage to renounce the *old* which they despised in their hearts. Multitudes of Christians suffered for the Gospel; whereas not a single Pagan died a martyr to Paganism, when the Heathens were persecuted in the fourth century by the Christians. It is admitted that men may endure evils in support of false opinions, which they believed to be true; but the Christians suffered in support of facts,  
and

and not of opinions ; nor can unbelievers CHAP.  
name the man, much less the number of men, <sup>II.</sup>   
who voluntarily suffered every sort of evil  
in testimony of false facts, the belief of  
which did not procure them either worldly  
pleasure or advantage.

16. The conversion of Paul is alone sufficient to prove the truth of the Christian revelation. After the crucifixion of Jesus, the chief priests and rulers who put him to death persecuted his followers, imprisoned some of them, and put others to death. St. Paul, who was a Pharisee, not only concurred in persecuting the Christians, who were in Jerusalem; but  
“ went unto the high-priest and desired of  
“ him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way  
“ whether they were men or women, he  
“ might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.” His request was complied with, and “ he went to Damascus with authority and commission from the high-priests ; and in his way to Damascus he  
“ saw a light from heaven above the  
I “ brightness

Its truth  
confirmed  
by the  
conversion  
of Paul.

CHAP. "brightness of the sun shining round

IL

" about him and his fellow-travellers;  
 " and he heard a voice from heaven, say-  
 " ing unto him in the Hebrew tongue,  
 " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

From that moment he became a profelyte to the Gospel, and a zealous advocate instead of a violent persecutor: nor is it probable that this account was fabricated. If St. Paul's fellow-travellers had not seen the miraculous light, they would doubtless have contradicted his account of this miracle; as it is probable they were magistrates or soldiers employed by the high-priests and rulers against the Christians, and do not appear to have had any connection with Paul, either before or after this time. Nor was St. Paul an enthusiast. Though zealous he was rational and moral; while enthusiasts have been extravagant in their doctrines and actions (*x*). The visions of Christian enthusiasts tended to confirm strange opinions founded on ancient prejudices carried to excess: whereas St.

(*x*) See Sect. xi of this Ch.

Paul was not so liable to deception in respect to a vision which tended to subvert the prejudices of his education. Some enthusiasts fancied they saw visions in the night, during their sleep, or when they were alone; while St. Paul saw the light and heard the voice in the day, while he was awake and in the presence of others. Had St. Paul been an impostor, he would have ascribed his own conversion to a miracle wrought among friends, rather than to one performed among enemies or strangers to the Gospel; who would have exposed his falshood had he been an impostor. But for the truth of the miracle wrought in his conversion he appealed to king Agrippa (*e*), who did not contradict him; though he must have heard all that the Jews could have alleged against it. St. Paul, having commenced a preacher before the Gospels were published, must have been inspired, or have learned from the Apostles an exact knowledge of its doctrines and facts, together with the means

CHAP.  
II.

(*e*) Acts xxvi.



CHAP. whereby they supported their claims to mi-  
<sup>II.</sup>  
 racles. If he had collected this knowledge from report, he and the Apostles would have differed in some points, and exposed each other by their mutual differences. If they suspected his sincerity, they would not have trusted him with their confidence; nor would they, if they had been cheats themselves, have committed their secrets to one who had persecuted them. St. Paul could not have expected wealth, power or reputation by embracing the Gospel; nor to gratify any vicious appetite under the authority of it. He could not have expected to grow rich by joining the poor and oppressed Christians; and he was so far from seeking to enrich himself by the charities of the churches which he afterwards planted, that he often refused to accept any part of it for the necessities of life. “ Even unto this present hour,” says he to the Corinthians (*f*), “ we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and buffeted, “ and have no certain dwelling place, and

(*f*) 1 Cor. xv. 8.

“ labour

“labour working with our own hands.” His CHAP.  
II. appeals to the Theſſalonians and Ephesians } prove his diſintereſtedneſs; as he declares to the former, “neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought, but wrought with labour night and day that we might not be chargeable to any of you” (g). In his farewel to the Ephesians, he thus expreſſes himſelf: “I have coveted no man’s ſilver, gold or apparel; yea you yourſelves know that theſe hands have miniſtered to my neceſſities and to them that were with me” (h). Had he been idle or avaricious ſuch appeals would have expoſed himſelf, and ſubverted his religion. Nor could he have expected credit by joining a deſpiſed ſect whoſe leaders were men of low birth and vulgar education, whoſe doctrines were contrary to the wiſdom of the Heathens, and whoſe Lord and maſter was crucified as a malefactor. Could the diſciple of the learned Gamaliel have expected credit by becoming a teacher in a college of fiſhermen? or by preaching

(g) 2 Theſſ. iii.

(h) Acts xx, 33.

“Chriſt

CHAP. <sup>II</sup> “Christ crucified, who was to the Jews a  
 “stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness?” And though he found by experience, that contempt was to be the portion of those, who preached such doctrines; yet did he persevere in the work, and was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. He was not influenced by a love of power; since power over fishermen or mechanics would ill compensate for the danger he was exposed to from his enemies, who would be more severe on him who deserted them than on any of the Apostles. Nor did he pretend to any superiority over the other Apostles, but declared himself “the least of them” and “less than the least of all the Saints. Now this I say, that every one of you saith I am of Paul and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul (i)?” And elsewhere he asks, “who then is Paul and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom

(i) 1 Cor. chap. i.

“ye

“ ye believed (k) ?” And again, “ we CHAP.  
“ preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus <sup>II.</sup> }  
“ the Lord, and ourselves your servants  
“ for Jesus’ sake (l).” This was not the  
language of a person, who wished for  
authority; and who was so far from flat-  
tering his followers to raise himself to  
power, that he freely reprov’d whatever  
was wrong in them. He enjoined and  
practis’d obedience to rulers, claimed no  
power but spiritual, and without any mix-  
ture of that civil dominion, which an im-  
postor always looks for. He did not claim  
an absolute power over the churches he  
planted; since he preached Christ and not  
himself: Christ as the head, himself only  
as the minister, and called those who as-  
sisted him in preaching, his fellow-labourers  
and fellow-servants. He did not avail  
himself of a better education or superior  
learning to raise himself above his fellow-  
labourers; but made light of those advan-  
tages. He declared he “ came not with  
“ excellency of speech or of wisdom but

(k) 1 Cor. chap. iii.

(l) 2 Cor. iv. 5.

“ determined



CHAP. II. "determined to know nothing" (among his converts) "save Jesus Christ and him crucified—that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God." By putting himself on a level with the other Apostles, who knew Christ as well as he, he proved his own disinterestedness; whereas an impostor would have employed his superior abilities and knowledge, to raise himself to be the head of a sect, at least of the profelytes made by himself. Some philosophers, it must be acknowledged, despised wealth and dignities as well as St. Paul; from pride or from a selfish view to the tranquility of their own minds; while the Apostle despised them for the conversion of mankind to true religion and virtue. The consciousness of their virtue, or perhaps the beauty of it, made the philosophers some amends for the things of this world; whereas the apostle, if an impostor, wanted this consciousness to support him under afflictions. Nor did he expect to gratify any

any vicious passion under the mask of religion; since his writings every where breathe the strictest morality, obedience to laws and magistrates, and an abhorrence of idleness or licentiousness under the cloak of religion. For his doctrines and conduct, he thus appealed to the Thessalonians: "Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; ye are witnesses and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe (m)." To the Corinthians he saith, "we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man (n);" and he expresses the same disinterested and holy spirit in his epistles Timothy, Titus and Philemon his bosom friends, as to the churches of Corinth, Ephesus, &c. Having shewed that Paul gained nothing by embracing the Gospel; let us consider what he resigned, and had reason to fear on account of it. He resigned a fortune which was

CHAP.  
II.

(m) 1 Thess. ii.

(n) 2 Cor. vii.

advancing,

CHAP. <sup>II.</sup> advancing, and a reputation which he acquired by his studies and by a conduct which had been “blameless touching the “righteousness which is in the law (o).” He gave up his friends and relations; he gave up that “religion which he had profited in “above many his equals (p);” and those traditions of which the Pharisaic sect, whereof he was a member, was extremely tenacious. By his conversion he sacrificed his favourite tenets, the pride of his sect, and the prejudices of his education; and was exposed to the vengeance of those whom he deserted, to the contempt of those whose good opinion he had valued and to all those evils which he pathetically describes in his second epistle to the Corinthians (q). Nor did Paul labour to propagate a false but useful religion, like some wise and good Heathens, who pretended to revelations; in order to civilize rude people, and to make them amenable to their government and laws. For Heathen legislators founded their pretended revelations

(o) Philip. iii, 6. (p) 1 Gal. i, 4. (q) vi, 4, 5, &c.

on the established superstitions; while Paul CHAP.  
II.  
opposed the prejudices of his followers. {

Besides, the pious frauds of Pagan law-givers injured no man, and served thousands; while the impostures of Paul exposed himself and his followers to disgrace, to torments or to death. Nor was he a stranger to those sufferings; since he warned his disciples of them, but told them for their comfort, that "the sufferings of the present life, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." These arguments are powerfully enforced by Lord Lyttleton, who leaves no room to question the sincerity of the apostle or the truth of his religion.

17. Christianity is in every respect worthy of a wise and good God; by exhibiting an example of spotless purity which we may safely imitate (*b*), by its excellent doctrines, and by its wisdom in determining in difficult cases. Christ did not resemble the ancient or modern enthusiasts in

By the  
life and  
doctrines  
of its  
author.

(*b*) See Bishop Newcome's *Life of Christ*.

his



CHAP. his doctrines, motives or conduct. The

<sup>II.</sup>  
 Lord's prayer is a model of sober piety ; its author was not, like some gloomy ascetics, averſe from the pleasures of ſocial intercourſe, nor charged with any vice even by his enemies. The wiſeſt and beſt of the Heathen ſages were accuſed of vices ; whereas Origen (r) obſerves, that though ſix hundred calumnies had been diſgorged againſt Jeſus, none dared to charge him with any intemperance. Chriſtianity teaches the doctrine of futurity, commands us to do good to enemies, recommends forgive- neſs and ſpiritual worſhip, regulates the thoughts, forbids oſtentation in our devo- tions and charities, diſcourages diſcontent and deſpair, and commands or prohibits other matters little inſiſted on by the wiſeſt of the ancients. The Chriſtian ſystem aſ- ſures us of a future ſtate, of which the Heathen philoſophers had but faint ideas ; though its ſanctions exalt the mind above the little purſuits of this world, and tend to render men incorruptible by wealth or

(r) *Contra Celſum* lib. iii, p. 470. Edit. Paris 1733.

honour.

honour. The religion, the philosophy, CHAP.  
II.  
and the laws of the Greeks and Romans }  
did not enjoin tenderness or pity to the sick  
and needy; whereas the humane spirit of  
the Gospel, and the laws of the first Chris-  
tian lawgivers encouraged alms-giving, and  
laid the foundation of hospitals and other  
charitable institutions, wheresoever it was  
adopted (f). It enjoins kind offices to ene-  
mies which was never prescribed by the  
Heathen philosophers, and the forgiveness  
of injuries, a virtue little known before the  
Christian æra. Tully (t) reckons it the  
chief duty of justice not to injure another  
unprovoked, and observes that a good man  
offends no person unless instigated by ill  
usage. Even the Goddess of Wisdom ap-  
plauds Ulysses, for ungenerously exulting  
over his vanquished rival in his madness  
and distress.

Ουκουν γελως ηδισος εις εκθους γελαι (u)?

*Is it not the highest sport to laugh at enemies?*

(f) See Hist. Effects of Religion vol. ii. Supplem. to Sect.  
iii.

(t) Off. lib. i, cap. 7, & lib. iii, cap. 19.

(u) Soph. Ajax Mastig. Act i, Scene i.

It

CHAP. It is undeniable that a few of the heathen  
 II. philosophers argued against revenge; but  
 a learned writer (*w*) has proved the arguments to be in some respects false, and their motives to this virtue to be feeble compared to those of the Gospel, which requires us to pardon the injuries we have received, as the indispensable condition of our own forgiveness from God. It requires us to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to “do unto others whatsoever we would that men should do unto us:” which injunctions were scarcely thought of at Christ’s appearance, tho’ the former regulates our devotions, and the latter our conduct one towards another. Impure thoughts, which are the source and constant forerunners of impure actions, are checked by the Gospel, which declares that “out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, &c. (*x*)” and that “whoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with

(*w*) Leland’s Christian Revelt. Part ii. Chap. 18.

(*x*) Matth. xv. 10.

“her

“her already in his heart (y).” In order to induce us to act from a sense of duty, it forbids ostentation in our devotions and good works. “When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly (z).” It also desires us to “take heed that we do not our alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise we have no reward of our Father which is in Heaven (a).”

These passages were not intended to restrain public worship or public charity, which are useful and necessary; but to prevent men from performing them from a principle of vanity or empty show. Christianity has a tendency to prevent or remove pride, discontent and despair. By representing all men as children of the same God and heirs of the same Salvation, it tends to humble the proud and add dignity to the lowly, to render the opu-

(y) Matth. v. 28.

(z) Matth. vi. 6.

(a) Matth. vi. 1.



CHAP. <sup>II.</sup> lent gentle and condescending to the poor, and the poor resigned and contented with their condition. It teaches that worldly sufferings are equally the lot of good and bad men; being sent to good men as trials of their virtue, and to the bad as the means of restoring them to virtue. This doctrine prevents despair in the virtuous man, and encourages him to hold fast his integrity under the most calamitous circumstances. Patience, forgiveness and humility, tho' commonly despised, Christianity recommends by precept and example; but is wisely silent about boldness, violence and other qualities which were generally admired, tho' destructive in their effects. If all possessed the former qualities mankind would be happy; if the latter prevailed universally, the earth would be a scene of violence; and we all know that mankind are happy or miserable, according as the former or latter qualities seem to prevail (*b*). Christianity requires

(*b*) See Soame Jennings on the internal Evidences of Christianity.

wives to be faithful and respectful to their husbands, husbands to affectionate and indulgent to their wives; servants to be sincere and attentive to their masters, masters to be kind and gentle to their servants; subjects to be loyal and obedient to the laws, and princes to be humane and gentle to their subjects. It tends to render men virtuous and happy in every sort of government; but does not expressly enjoin resistance or non-resistance to rulers. Did it authorize resistance, turbulent men might have a pretext for subverting governments; did it enjoin non-resistance, subjects might think themselves bound to submit implicitly to all the encroachments of disposition. He said "his kingdom was not of this world," and declined interfering in questions relative to policy, property or law. When he was asked whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not; he eluded the question by commanding to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." When "one of the company said unto him master, speak to my brother to divide the inheritance with me; he said unto him,

K

man

CHAP. <sup>II.</sup> “man who made me a judge or a ruler  
 “over you (c) ?” He also refused to pass  
 sentence on the woman taken in adultery;  
 very properly confining himself to his spi-  
 ritual office, and desiring her to “go and  
 “sin no more (d).” Christ laboured to  
 correct the morals of men, but did not  
 attempt to alter their civil establishments;  
 as such an attempt must have destroyed the  
 peace which he came to promote. It was  
 doubtless for this reason that Peter (e) ex-  
 hortated the Christians of Asia to “submit  
 “themselves to every ordinance of man  
 “for the Lord’s sake, whether it be to  
 “the king as supreme, or unto governors  
 “sent by him for the punishment of evil  
 “doers, &c.” Paul (f) enjoins nearly the  
 same doctrine to the Christians of Rome.  
 “Let every soul be subject to the higher  
 “powers; for there is no power but of  
 “God: the powers that be are ordained  
 “of God.” Hence it appears that Peter  
 and Paul adapted their epistles to the situ-  
 ations of those whom they respectively ad-  
 dressed. The Christians of Asia, where the

(c) Luke, xii. 13.

(d) John, viii.

(e) 1 Pet. ii. 3

(f) Rom. xiii.

governments were fixed despotisms, Peter <sup>CHAP.</sup> advised to obey the *king* and his deputies; <sup>II.</sup> whereas in Rome, where the form of government under the Emperors was not fully settled, St. Paul exhorted the Christians to be subject to the *higher powers*, but without determining who they were. St. Paul was a bold advocate for liberty, and even asserted that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." But lest this passage should encourage slaves to quit their masters, he commands them to be resigned under their condition. "Let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God: art thou a slave, care not for it, but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." They therefore who profess to teach the Gospel in its purity, should not make their pulpits the vehicles of sedition; by inveighing against ancient establishments, magnifying their errors, passing over in silence the blessings enjoyed by their flocks, diverting them from industry to politics, and rendering discontented those whom it is their duty to render peaceable and happy. The letter and spirit of the Christian religion forbid men to resist

K 2

rulers



CHAP.  
II.

rulers in the exercise of their *usual* authority; but not in the exercise of powers which *were not exercised* before. No blame therefore is to be imputed to Christianity whose humane spirit has actually mitigated the rigours of ancient despotisms (g), and which does not forbid an opposition to princes, where they attempt to encroach on the liberties of their subjects.

And by  
the unde-  
signed co-  
incidence  
of the sa-  
cred wri-  
ters.

18. The agreement among the Apostles, Evangelists and their proselytes, as to the principal facts and doctrines of Christianity, furnish a probable argument of the truth of their narratives. For, had the Gospels been published by Christ himself, or by the Apostles, immediately after his death; then it might be expected that their respective converts in different parts of the world, should agree as to its facts and doctrines. But as he left no writing, and as the Apostles did not write immediately after his death; we may consider the agreement among the first preachers, the Evangelists and their different proselytes, as a strong evidence of the truth of the New Testa-

(g) Hist. Effects of Religion vol. ii. Supplem. to sect. iii.

ment;

ment; for if they spoke or wrote from CHAP  
fancy and not from facts, they would have <sup>II.</sup> }  
differed among themselves, and exposed any  
falsehood in each others relations. Nor  
should we be surprised that the Gospels  
were not published immediately after the  
death of Christ; since the authors wanted  
leisure to write, having been busy in preach-  
ing, travelling, or defending themselves  
against persecution. All the Evangelists  
ascribe to Christ the same mode of speaking  
and acting, and of drawing important in-  
structions from small incidents or occasions;  
of which the following are the most strik-  
ing instances. "Then they said unto him,  
"behold thy mother and thy brethren stand  
"without, desiring to speak with thee.  
"But he answered and said who is my mo-  
"ther? and who are my brethren? and he  
"stretched forth his hands towards his dis-  
"ciples and said, behold my mother and  
"my brethren; for whosoever shall do the  
"will of my Father which is in Heaven,  
"the same is my brother and sister and mo-  
"ther (b)." This is his reflection on the  
trifling circumstance of his mother and bre-

(b) Matth. xii. 49.

CHAP. then desiring to speak to him; and the  
 II. following circumstance furnished an occasion for another reflection. “Then came  
 “to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees saying,  
 “why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the Elders? for they wash not  
 “their hands when they eat bread,” on which he observes; “not that which goeth  
 “into the mouth, but that which cometh  
 “out of it defileth a man—Those things  
 “which proceed out of the mouth, come  
 “forth from the heart and defile the man;  
 “for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,  
 “murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts,  
 “false witness, blasphemies; these are  
 “the things which defile the man; but  
 “to eat with unwashen hands defileth not  
 “a man(*i*).” The following passage of  
 St. Mark (*k*) furnishes a similar instance of  
 Christ’s manner of making reflections on  
 small incidents. “Now as he walked by  
 “the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and  
 “Andrew his brother, casting a net into  
 “the sea for they were fishers; and Jesus  
 “said unto them, come ye after me and I  
 “will make you fishers of men.” In St.

(*i*) Matth. xv.(*k*) i. 16.

Luke (l) also we find instances of this kind, CHAP. II.  
 the most remarkable of which are the two following. “ And it came to pass as he  
 “ speak these things, that a certain woman  
 “ said unto him, blessed is the womb that  
 “ bare thee and the paps which thou hast  
 “ sucked: but he said yea, rather blessed  
 “ are they that hear the word of God and  
 “ keep it.” The following incident also  
 suggested a useful observation. “ There  
 “ were present at that season some that told  
 “ him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate  
 “ had mingled with their sacrifices; and  
 “ Jesus said unto them, suppose ye that  
 “ these Galileans were sinners above all  
 “ the Galileans because they suffered such  
 “ things? I tell you nay, but except you  
 “ repent ye shall all likewise perish.” We  
 find the same manner of making reflections  
 in the Gospel by St. John (m); tho’ he  
 wrote after the other Evangelists, omits  
 many things which they relate, relates  
 many things which they omit, and whose  
 Gospel is generally considered as a supple-  
 ment to theirs. “ Art thou,” saith the  
 woman of Samaria to our Saviour, “ great-

(l) xi. 27. xiii. 1. (m) iv. 12. iv. 31.



CHAP. II. “er than our father Jacob who gave us the  
 “ well, and drank thereof himself and his  
 “ children and his cattle? Jesus answered  
 “ and said unto her, whosoever drinketh of  
 “ this water shall thirst again, but who-  
 “ ever drinketh of the water that I shall  
 “ give him shall never thirst; but the wa-  
 “ ter that I shall give him shall be in him  
 “ a well of water springing up into ever-  
 “ lasting life.” One instance more may  
 suffice to shew the agreement between him  
 and the other Evangelists in respect to the  
 manner of his teaching. “ In the mean  
 “ while his disciples prayed him saying,  
 “ master eat; but he said unto them I have  
 “ meat to eat that ye know not of.”  
 “ Therefore said the disciples one to ano-  
 “ ther, hath any man given him ought to  
 “ eat? Jesus said unto them my meat is to  
 “ do the will of him that sent me, and to  
 “ finish his work.” Thus the four Gospels  
 represent Christ as frequently drawing mor-  
 tal instruction from small incidents; nor  
 do we find any thing of this kind in any  
 other part of the new testament, not even  
 in the book of the acts which was written  
 by St. Luke one of the Evangelists, An  
 agreement

agreement among the Evangelists in small CHAP. matters, proves they wrote from facts and <sup>II</sup> not from fancy relative to Christ; for tho' a forger might easily have ascribed to his hero, virtue and abilities; yet he would hardly have thought of forging small incidents, for the purpose of making important reflections on them. And tho' men who possessed the talents of dramatic writers might forge both the incidents and reflections; yet the Evangelists, who were artless and candid would be unable to accomplish so difficult a work. The ingenious writer (n) from whom the substance of the section is borrowed, justly considers undesignedness in an author as a mark of truth; and has pointed out an undesigned coincidence in several passages of the acts and in the epistles of St. Paul in about eighty instances. So many instances in points seemingly immaterial prove they were not the offspring of art or contrivance. As an agreement in great matters may be fabricated, it proves little as to the truth of them; whereas coincidences which were

(n) Paley's Evidences, part ii. chap. 4. and his *Horæ Paulinæ* passim.

accidental

CHAP. accidental, and in small matters are not to  
 {<sup>II</sup> be attributed to art or design. The follow-  
 ing is one of the instances employed by Mr.  
 Paley in illustrating this argument. In St.  
 Paul's epistle to the Romans, (a) he ex-  
 presses an intention of going to Jerusalem,  
 with a contribution which he made for the  
 poor Christians of that city. "But now I  
 "go to Jerusalem to minister unto the saints,  
 "for it hath pleased them of Macedonia  
 "and Achaia, to make a certain contribu-  
 "tion for the poor Saints which are at Jeru-  
 "salem." In his other epistles and in the  
 book of the Acts these things are hinted at,  
 and evidently without any design of pointing  
 out a conformity between different parts of  
 Scripture. In his first epistle to the Corin-  
 thians (b) we are told, there was a collec-  
 tion going on in Corinth (the capital of  
 Achaia) for the Christians of Jerusalem;  
 but without a word of the contribution in  
 Macedonia; and in the second epistle to the  
 Corinthians (c) we have an account of a  
 contribution in Macedonia, but no intima-  
 tion for whom it was intended, no menti-  
 on of a collection in Achaia, nor a word

(a) xv. 25.

(b) Ch. xvi.

(c) Ch. viii.

about

about the journey. In the Acts (d) mention is made of Paul's intended journey to Jerusalem, but not a syllable about the contribution; whereas in his defence before Felix, he observes that he brought alms and offerings to his nation (e). The bringing of alms to his nation was part of his defence; and designed to shew, that the business which brought him to Jerusalem did not merit the ill treatment he received from the Jews. The ingenious Paley collects from these scattered circumstances, that each of them is true; being related without art, contrivance or design.

19. From the happy effects, which accrued from the Gospel, we may easily believe that a wise and good God would enjoin it, for the benefit of his creatures. Those happy effects are thus briefly summed up in the second volume of the history of the effects of religion on mankind. The professors of Christianity refrained from many vices and barbarous customs which were common among the Heathens; and practised several virtues to which the Hea-

CHAP.  
II.

Its truth  
confirmed  
by its hap-  
py effects.

(d) Ch. xx, 16.

(e) xxiv, 17.

thens



CHAP. <sup>II</sup> thens were almost total strangers. It improved its first converts in truth, honesty, patience, chastity, humility, charity and loving kindness, and discouraged polygamy, brothels, adultery, suicide, the fights of gladiators, human sacrifices, the murder of children and other crimes. So exemplary were the first Christians, that Pliny the younger bears testimony to their innocence; and the emperor Julian recommends their virtues to the imitation of the Heathens. By comparing the condition of mankind before and after the promulgation of the Gospel, we shall find that it improved both princes and their subjects in virtue and happiness. Heathen princes having been more vicious than their Christian successors; we may judge of the morals of their respective subjects. Fewer kings were murdered and fewer revolutions took place in Christian than in Pagan states; and the wars of the latter were more incessant and bloody than those of the former. Those emperors who embraced Christianity became more humble than their Heathen predecessors, blended Christian morality with their civil institutes and transcribed into their  
their

their political codes the humanity and benevolence inspired by their religion. We <sup>CHAP.</sup>  
<sup>II.</sup> have produced numerous instances of the beneficence of its first converts; and proved that Christendom is indebted to it for many charitable institutions little known to the Gentile world. It was productive of salutary effects in the execution of justice, in relieving distress, in restraining the ferocity of warriors and the revenge of Barbarians, in mitigating the cruelties of the Heathens and disposing their hearts to pity and beneficence. It removed the bad effects of false religion in all nations which embraced it, abated national prejudices and rendered men more liberal in their conduct towards each other. It abolished polygamy, which was a source of jealousy and strife in families; and the privilege of divorce, which could not fail to be attended with fear and hatred. Its humane spirit prompted the clergy to preach and write against the fights of gladiators, mitigated the rigours of servitude and abated the evils of feudal oppression. The Heathens strangled, drowned or exposed their children; while Christian princes abolished this practice, and instituted

CHAP. tuted hospitals for the preservation of  
<sup>II.</sup> foundlings. The Pagans used to sell their  
captives and inflict corporal punishment  
on debtors; the Christians, on the con-  
trary, redeemed captives, and forbad the  
cruelties which were exercised towards  
debtors. In some cases the Heathens de-  
termined concerning right and wrong by  
single combat; whereas the Christian clergy  
observed such just maxims in their courts as  
contributed to abolish or reform martial  
tribunals. The Pagan worship having been  
merely ritual, its priests required no know-  
ledge or erudition; whilst the use of letters  
seems essential to a religion which is written  
in books. The Heathen philosophers taught  
only the rich; the Christian teachers  
preached the Gospel to the poor as well  
as to the opulent; and to those teachers we  
must ascribe the preservation of books  
which must otherwise have perished, when  
a taste for literature was almost extinct, and  
the passion of the laity turned to arms.  
The instructions of the Pagan sages and  
Jewish prophets were confined to their  
own nation and neighbourhood; while the  
first

first heralds of the Gospel preached to all CHAP. nations, with that extensive benevolence <sup>II.</sup> which characterized their religion. The best laws and institutions of the Heathens were serviceable only in a particular nation or state; whilst Christianity has been useful in most nations of the globe. The Heathens had no public places for the accommodation of the sick, the poor, the widow or the orphan; whereas every nation in Christendom abounds with charitable institutions for these humane purposes. The Pagans might commit fornication, adultery and other crimes, agreeably to the religion and laws of their countries; but in Christian nations, no man can perpetrate them without acting contrary to both. Before the promulgation of the Gospel, some of those crimes were justified by the practices of the gods and philosophers; but since that period they have been exploded by the Scriptures, and by the laws of the Christian emperors. Some Pagans did not consider fornication either criminal or disgraceful in men; but the Scriptures condemn it in the males as well as in the females. The Heathens tolerated brothels; whereas



CHAP. <sup>II.</sup> whereas the first Christian emperors fined  
bawds and redeemed several women from  
the horrors of prostitution. Certain Pagan  
nations might commit suicide cordially and  
conscientiously; whilst no Christian can  
perpetrate this crime, without knowing  
that he acts contrary to the principles of  
his religion. After the introduction of  
Christianity in Germany, its inhabitants did  
not offer human victims, nor were the  
Huns strangers to the difference of right  
and wrong after they embraced it. The  
Vidini and Geloni no longer used the skins  
of their enemies for clothes; the Heruli  
did not as usual put to death the aged and  
infirm; nor did the Slavini impale men  
alive or beat them to death. The princes  
of the Abasgi did not emasculate beautiful  
boys nor sell them to the Romans; nor did  
the Hungarians devour the hearts of their  
captives after they became Christians. The  
Gauls and Danes did not offer human sacri-  
fices; nor did certain nations eat human  
flesh after their conversion. The descen-  
dants of those Britons, who formerly killed  
their prisoners or burned them in wickers,  
now feed and clothe them; and this once  
fierce

fierce and inhospitable people, who prohibited any commerce with strangers, now CHAP.  
II.

encourage intercourses with all nations of the earth. After the conversion of the Scandinavians, they could not commit suicide on principle; nor did their wives and slaves voluntarily put themselves to death, in order to honour the deceased in the paradise of Oden. The Danes, Norwegians, Russians and other fierce nations acquired more just ideas of property after their conversion, have been less addicted to rapine and piracy, and consequently less terrible to the neighbouring kingdoms. The northern nations, which were engaged in incessant wars while they were Heathens, have been more peaceable after the Christian religion was published among them. The Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians, who could only mutter in a barbarous language, learned the use of letters: a people, who were continually making depredations on their neighbours, became content with their own territories; and nations almost inaccessible on account of their superstition and cruelty, grew gentle and sociable in consequence of their conversion. Such was the happy

L

change

CHAP. change wrought by the Christian religion

II.

on the state of ancient societies! nor was it less useful among modern Pagans, so far as it was propagated and inculcated among them. In Mexico they no longer sacrifice men and children; nor in Congo are wives buried with their deceased husbands. At Metamba they do not put sick persons to death; nor at Angola do they, as formerly, sacrifice human victims at funerals. The inhabitants of Paraguay are not cruel or vindictive, nor fling themselves from precipices in honour of their idols. Upon the whole it appears, that the Christians exhibited virtues little practised by the Heathens, and refrained from crimes which the Pagans committed without shame or remorse; and that most nations of Europe were rude and illiterate until they were civilized by the missionaries, who instructed them in letters, in manufactures and in useful arts. All these points have been fully proved in the history of the effects of religion on mankind; which history also, vindicates Christianity from the charge of many evils that have been falsely imputed to



to it by the weak, the ignorant or the designing.

CHAP.  
II  
}

20. We may be convinced of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, from what has been delivered in the preceding pages; to which we may add the following observations. It would have been impossible for eight persons, most of them unlearned, to write without any appearance of concert, a large work containing various historical facts, tenets, &c.; if their accounts were not true. The New Testament was published in the life time of thousands, who were as competent judges of many facts it relates as the authors of it; so that those authors are not the only witnesses of the authenticity of the Scriptures. It is a strong evidence of the truth of Christianity that twelve Apostles, seventy Disciples and several others died, or were ready to die in attestation of it, and that not one out of so many ever came forward to detect an imposture which exposed him to disgrace, to tortures or to death. We admit that some of its first converts forsook it, and relapsed into the ancient superstitions;



CHAP.  
II.

stitutions; but defy unbelievers to name a single apostate, who attempted to prove from facts that it was founded on imposture. Christianity is more honoured by the constancy of one profelyte who embraced and adhered to it, contrary to his interest or prejudices; than it is injured by the apostacy of one hundred weak persons, who renounced it in compliance with both. The testimony of the Apostles deserves more credit than that of the Jewish priests and rulers who rejected it; as the former had no interest to advance by a falsehood, while the latter were attached to the ancient system from interest or prejudice. The apostles could not have expected either honour or emolument, by preaching the doctrines of a leader who candidly foretold the troubles that awaited his disciples. Impostors generally promise their followers temporal advantages; whereas our Lord told his followers, they must endure present sufferings: and it is doubtful whether we should most admire his candour, or the firmness of his followers, who endured every hardship rather than renounce their religion.

gion. Had they embraced a false religion CHAP.  
II.  
from a prospect of pleasure or worldly interest, doubtless some of them would have discovered the cheat when they found their disappointment, and the evils which they suffered on account of it. The dread of punishment or the hope of reward has often prompted men to lie, or objure opinions which they believed to be true; but the whole tribe of unbelievers can not name the man who has voluntarily sacrificed his temporal interest, or endured torments and death in support of an opinion which he knew to be false. Many have died martyrs to false opinions not knowing them to be so; but no person ever died attesting a falsehood which procured him neither pleasure nor profit in this life, and which subjected him to punishment in that which is to come. In the early ages of Christianity there was no doubt of the authenticity of the four Gospels, the acts of the Apostles or the majority of the Epistles; so that the cavils of the Deists, in many centuries after its publication, can have but little weight.

2. Having

CHAP. 21. Having advanced several positive  
 II. <sup>The New</sup> proofs and confirmations of the truth of  
 Testa- the Scriptures, we proceed to shew that  
 ment was not forged they could not have been forged, interpolated or materially altered. Tho' in general it is difficult to prove a negative; yet we trust the following observations will evince, that the Gospels neither were nor could have been forged. From the character (a) of the Apostles we may be certain, they would not have attempted a forgery; and if they made the attempt in the apostolic age, when the things are said to have happened, every person must have been sensible of the forgery. The New Testament consisting of several pieces which are ascribed to eight persons; we can not suppose it to have been an imposture: for if they wrote in concert, they would not differ as they do in slight matters; and if one man wrote the whole, there would not be such a diversity as we see in the stile of the different pieces. If the Apostles were all honest they were incapable of a forgery; and if they were all knaves, they were unlikely to labour to render men

(a) Sect. x. of this chap.



virtuous. If some of them were honest and the rest cheats, the latter could not have deceived the former in respect to matters of fact; nor is it probable that impostors would have attempted a forgery which exposed them to many inconveniencies. Had parts of the Scripture been fabricated in the second or third century by obscure persons, their forgeries would have been rejected by the respectable: and if pious and learned men had forged certain passages, their frauds however well intended would have been discovered by the insignificant who are ever prone to criticize those who are their superiors in virtue or abilities. If the teachers of Christianity in one kingdom forged certain passages of Scripture, the copies in the hands of laymen would discover the forgery; nor would it have been possible to obtain credit for such a forgery in other nations. Mark, Luke and John having understood Greek and Hebrew; their Gospels which were written in the former language contain many Hebrew words. Hence we may be certain the Gospels were not forged by those fathers who were strangers to Hebrew; since then they would  
not

CHAP.  
II.



CHAP. not abound with Hebrew words: nor by

II.

Justin Martyr, Origen or Epiphanius who understood both Greek and Hebrew; since the greek writings of these fathers differ in stile from that of the Gospels. The New Testament not being calculated to advance the private interest of priests or rulers; we cannot suppose it was forged by the clergy or by princes. As its teachers suffered in propagating it, and as it was not the established religion of any nation for 300 years; it is absurd to suppose it the offspring of priestcraft or a mere political contrivance. For 300 years after Christ, no man had any thing to dread from exposing a forgery in the sacred writings; since during that time, the Christians wanted power to punish informers.

The New  
Testa-  
ment not  
interpola-  
ted.

22. A Mr. Evanfon, who believes in the miracles of Christ, in the completion of his prophecies and in the divine authority of his religion, dislikes certain parts or passages of our Scriptures. But instead of rejecting the whole New Testament, as the Deist does, on account of those parts

or

or passages which he dislikes, he maintains CHAP.  
II. that they were forged or interpolated in } the last half of the second century, or in the beginning of the third; and appeals to certain parts of Irenæus, Tertullian and Origen in support of his opinion. Irenæus (*e*), who flourished A. D. 178, observed that different Sectarists of his days produced many apocryphal books, to astonish the weak and ignorant. But surely a great deal of base coin does not prove, that there is none which is genuine. Besides, the number of heretics in the time of Irenæus would have rendered it almost impossible to forge any part of our Scriptures, at that time; since men who were so well acquainted with them as to counterfeit them, or borrow their opinions from them, would doubtless have detected the orthodox had they attempted to do so. “Tho’ there “is a great variety of languages in the “world, saith Irenæus (*f*), yet the tradition of the Christian faith is every where “the same; in Spain, in Gaul, in the East, “in Egypt, in Lybia, in the remote as

(*e*) Adv. Har. lib. 1. cap. xvii. (*f*) ib. lib. 1. cap. 3, cum  
nota Ernesti Grabe.

CHAP. "well as in the middle parts of the world:

II.

"and as there is but one sun, so are all  
 "men enlightened by the same truth." It is  
 not credible, that the many nations which  
 embraced the Gospel, should agree to inter-  
 polate books which they revered, much  
 less agree in the parts to be interpolated:  
 and if all the individuals of one nation  
 should enter into such an agreement, which  
 is an improbable supposition, the copies in  
 other nations would discover the cheat.  
 Irenæus, who wrote against heretics, would  
 not have ventured to assert that the chris-  
 tian Faith like the sun was every where the  
 same, had he known any part of it to have  
 been forged or interpolated. Tertullian (*g*),  
 who flourished in the year 200, informs us  
 that an Asiatic priest was detected in at-  
 tempting to ascribe to St. Paul a work of  
 his own, in order to do honour to this  
 Apostle. The detection of this priest and  
 the degradation which followed it, furnish  
 a probable argument, that no part of our  
 Scriptures was forged at that time: for  
 if any part of them had been tempered with  
 when this fraudulent priest was detected

(*g*) De Bapt. Sect. xviii. prope finem.

and

and deposed, he would probably have re-  
torted on those who detected him, by charg-  
ing them with a similar crime. Nor were  
the Scriptures forged in the year 230; since  
Origen then observed, that some Chris-  
tians of his time were offended with the  
passage of St. Luke relative to the penitent  
thief, and suspected it to have been a late  
interpolation, because they were unable to  
explain it. The suspicion of the interpola-  
tion of a single passage of Scripture, espe-  
cially where the suspicion arose from the  
difficulty of it, is a tacit acknowledgement  
of the truth of the rest of the New Testa-  
ment. However Origen explained the pas-  
sage and denied it to have been an interpo-  
lation; whereas he would have been silent  
about it, if he thought it had been interpo-  
lated. Nor can I agree with Mr. Evanfon,  
relative to the facility of interpolating or  
forging passages of Scripture before the  
invention of printing; for tho' a man  
might tamper with his own copy, yet if he  
did so in essential points, or attempted to  
make his interpolated copy a standard of  
faith, the ancient copies of others would  
be

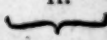
CHAP.  
II.



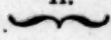
CHAP. have been produced, and pride would have  
 II. prompted many to restrain his presumption.  
 These observations, added to several important ones of Dr. Priestly, should convince Mr. Evanfon that he is under many mistakes in his opinions and reasonings.

The New  
 Testa-  
 ment not  
 altered

23. Nearly the same arguments which have been employed to prove that the Scriptures were not forged nor interpolated, serve to shew that they could not have suffered any material alteration. The Scriptures were early translated into different languages, and dispersed thro' many nations; each of which, it is absurd to suppose, would agree in an alteration. The number of ancient copies would have rendered it impossible to alter them, without detection; and the books of the New Testament were preserved from alteration by the several sects, each of which appealed to them for the truth of their opinions. If any material alteration was attempted by the orthodox, it would have been detected by the heretics; and if an heretic inserted any thing, he would have been exposed by the orthodox or by other heretics. Had the  
 council

council of Laodicea, which consisted of <sup>CHAP.</sup>  
32. Arian bishops A. D. 363, altered the <sup>II.</sup>   
Scriptures; the orthodox which hated  
them would have exclaimed against them.  
Nor can we suppose that the council of  
Carthage, which consisted of 44 bishops  
in the end of the fourth century, would  
have been unanimous in any alteration, if  
they had been all orthodox; much less if  
the assembly consisted of Arians and Ca-  
tholics. If the members of those councils  
had been divided in respect to the present  
canon, some at least of the minority would  
have cried out against such parts of it as  
they deemed unauthentic or altered: and  
in the violent controvercies of the Arians  
and orthodox, one of these parties would  
have accused the other of altering certain  
parts of Scripture, if either of them had  
been guilty of it. It would have been im-  
possible to alter all the copies in the east-  
ern empire; and if it had been possible in  
the East, the copies in the West would  
have detected the alteration. But in fact,  
the eastern and western copies exactly  
agree: which could not be expected, if  
either of them was altered. Some slight  
differences

CHAP. differences in the ancient copies of the

II.  Scriptures, have been objected to their truth; as it might be expected, that God would have transmitted them pure and faultless. But it should be considered, that the Scriptures convey the laws, doctrines and facts clearly; and that errors were inevitable, unless God interposed miraculously, to prevent revisers or transcribers from committing mistakes. In all ancient writings there are various lections, owing to a multitude of transcribers, and to the rashness of critics who often make unnecessary alterations; or insert into the text notes which at first were placed as comments in the margin (*b*). The Gospels and Epistles, not having been written by God or Christ, are not a revelation, but the history of a revelation, composed by men which it would be absurd to suppose inspired with an elegant stile, which is not necessary for conveying either religious or moral instruction. The author has dwelt thus long, on a very clear point; in order to silence the Deists, some of which have

(*b*) Phileleuth, Leips. Remark, xxxii

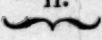
been

been so perverse, as to question the evi- CHAP.  
dence of mathematical demonstrations. II.

24. The arguments which have been advanced in support of Christianity furnish such a mass of evidence, as none can resist but the ignorant or prejudiced. The truth of the New Testament is founded on the testimonies of Pagan, Jewish, Christian, heretical and apocryphal writings, on the information, integrity and number of its writers and preachers, on the life, doctrines and miracles of its author, on the fulfilment of his prophecies, on the sufferings of its preachers, on the unstudied coincidence of the sacred writers, on its rapid propagation and happy effects. Pagan and Jewish authors concur with the sacred relative to the names of princes and governors, and to several opinions, doctrines and practices of the Jews; and the truth of these adds credibility to the principal Gospel facts which those authors had no occasion to mention, or to mention but slightly. The New Testament also derives credibility from being quoted or referred to in the writings of Barnabas, Clemens Romanus, Hermas, Ignatius

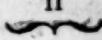
The evi-  
dences of  
the truth  
of Chris-  
tianity  
summed  
up.



CHAP. <sup>II.</sup>  natius and Polycarp who lived in the first century, and were contemporaries of the Apostles. The Gospels or Epistles have been alluded to, cited or defended by above twenty writers of the second century; and in the third, by near thirty authors (\*). Basilides, Cerinthus, Marcion, Novatus, the Donatists, the Manicheans and other heretics acknowledged the truth of the Gospels and Epistles, and are more culpable for perverting than for despising or rejecting them. The acts of Paul and Thecla, the recognitions, the gospels of Peter, Valentinus and Apelles, the apostolical constitutions and canons, the testament of the twelve patriarchs, and other supposititious writings bear testimony to the facts, principles and books of the New Testament. The Talmuds, though mixed with malicious insinuations against our Saviour, refer to his nativity and to his journey to Egypt; and ascribe his great works to the magic art which he learned in that country. Tacitus, Martial, Juvenal, Suetonius, Pliny the younger, Epictetus, Suidas, M. Antoninus the philosopher, Apuleius, Lucian, Celsus, Aristides, Galen

(\*) Lardner.

and

and other Heathen writers of the first two CHAP.  
centuries bear testimony to the antiquity of <sup>II</sup>   
the Scriptures, to the persecutions of the  
Christians under Nero and Domitian, to  
their patience and innocence, to the pro-  
pagation of the Gospel, and to other points  
relative to it and its professors. We can  
have no doubt of the truth of the New  
Testament, if we consider the information,  
integrity and consistency of the Apostles  
and authors of it. Great credit is due to  
the testimony of men who were well in-  
formed in what they relate; men who had  
strength of mind to conquer their preju-  
dices, and to conquer them without the  
prospect of any temporal advantage. The  
Apostles themselves could not have been  
deceived, as to the facts which they relate;  
and were unable to deceive others, if they  
had been disposed to an imposture. The  
Gospel history relates the murder of the  
infants, the darkness and earthquake at the  
Passion, the resurrection and ascension of  
Christ, and other important points, of  
which the Apostles and Evangelists could  
have judged by their senses; and in which  
it was impossible for them to have been de-

M

ceived.

CHAP. II. ceived. Had these and other extraordinary things been false, they must have subverted the religion which they were intended to establish. The integrity and candour of the Apostles leave no room for suspecting them of fraud or imposture. They forbid sin in thought, word or deed, require men to speak truth, conceal not the obscure birth, scourgings or ignominious death of their master, and candidly acknowledge their own meanness, illiterateness, cowardice, ambition, and other points which seemed to reflect on themselves or on their master. They agree as to facts and doctrines; and their slight differences where they disagree, only prove that they did not write in concert. Though zealous they did not inveigh against Judas who betrayed their master, against Pilate who passed sentence on him, nor against any of those who were concerned in his murder. They pursued their object with a moderation and firmness never observed by enthusiasts, disclaimed the vanity of being originals, and referred every thing to the crucified Jesus, whom alone they considered as their master; though he did not offer them any temporal



temporal reward, and even candidly fore-CHAP.  
told the troubles which awaited them. It <sup>II</sup>   
is a strong evidence of the truth of Christianity, that twelve Apostles and seventy Disciples, attached to the ancient religious system from interest or prejudice, should renounce both; and die attesting the truth of a religion which exposed to shame, to torments or to death. Poor and ignorant men propagated their religion to all nations, in opposition to the zeal of bigots, to the interest of priests, to the fury of the populace, to the power of rulers, to the policy of statesmen, and to the learning and pride of philosophers and rabbies: and the conversion of one Jew or Heathen to a persecuted religion was more extraordinary, than the rejection of it by thousands who were prejudiced against it. The success of the Gospel was wonderful, if we consider that its first preachers candidly told their followers, that they must renounce every thing that was dear to them, and be reviled and persecuted for the sake of it. Truth may prevail against power, and gradually bring power to its side; but it is incredible that an imposture should prevail against  
M 2 truth.



CHAP. <sup>II</sup> truth, where the impostors wanted authority to stifle evidence against their frauds or impostures. A book opposed by every government had nothing but its truth to support it against them all; any falsehood in the New Testament must have been soon detected: and the detection of a single fraud in Christ's miracles or otherwise, would have subverted it in its infancy. The chief argument of the divine commission of Jesus and of the truth of his religion is the performance of his miracles publicly and repeatedly in Jerusalem, and in all parts of Judea and Galilee. Christ enjoined his disciples to "heal the sick, to cleanse lepers, to raise the dead, and to cast out devils:" which injunction must have exposed both him and his religion, if they were unable to exercise this power. St. Paul, in his epistles to the churches of Corinth and Galatia, claimed miraculous powers; and the Jerusalem Talmud, tho' blended with malicious insinuations against Christ, admits that a child was cured in his name. Had these claims been false and unsupported by facts, all the sages of Greece and

and Rome could not have obtained credit CHAP.  
II.  
for them, much less poor and illiterate fishermen. The Heathens did not deny the matters of fact on which Christianity is founded; but attacked it by remote and far fetched cavils. Celsus, Lucian, Trypho, Hierocles, Porphyry, the emperor Julian, Volusian, the modern Jews and other enemies of Christianity acknowledged the miracles of Christ; but ascribed them to magic and other causes, denied them to be proofs of his divinity, or maintained them to be inferior to the miracles of the Heathens. The divine commission of Christ and the truth of his religion are also proved from the completion of his predictions relative to the treachery of Judas, the denial of Peter, the desertion of the Apostles, the sufferings of his followers, the success of his religion, the destruction of Jerusalem, and other important events which surpassed the reach of human conjecture. Some of these prophecies, like his miracles, were marks of his benevolence, and intended to guard his nation against the evils which threatened them. Christ surpassed all men in mildness and dignity,  
in

CHAP.<sup>II.</sup> in wisdom and goodness; nor can we suppose that Judas would have been stung with remorse for having betrayed him, if he had been an impostor. It is a collateral evidence of the truth of Christianity, that it has proved worthy of God; by its excellent doctrines, and by the manifold advantages which it produced in all the nations of the earth. Upon the whole, we have such a number of evidences of the truth of our religion, as no man can resist who duly considers them; and it is to an ignorance of those evidences, that we are chiefly to impute the infidelity which prevails in the world.

C H A P.

C H A P. III.

AN EXAMINATION OF SEVERAL POINTS  
RELATIVE TO THE EVIDENCES OF THE  
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT.

*Why the prophecies were obscure.—Scripture prophecies and Heathen oracles compared.—Jesus and the false prophets compared.—The argument from miracles and prophecies compared.—Causes of the rejection of Christian miracles by the Heathens.—The miracles of Moses and Christ compared.—Christ's miracles compared to those of Aristeas, Pythagoras and Alexander. —His miracles and those of Esculapius compared.—His miracles and those of Vespasian compared.—His miracles and those of Apollonius compared.—Scripture miracles and those of certain monks compared.—Scripture miracles and those of the Abbe de Paris compared.—The Gospel history more credible than the Greek or Roman. —Extraordinary things of Scripture more credible than those of profane history.—Incomprehen-*



*comprehensibleness of religious mysteries no argument of their falshood.—Inability to answer all objections no just cause for rejecting the Scriptures.*

## CHAP. I.

III.

Why the prophecies were obscure.

**H**AVING in the two preceding chapters briefly exhibited the evidences of the Law and the Gospel; let us examine some important points, which were there omitted: that we may not separate those evidences and weaken their force. The obscurity of the prophecies and of other parts of Scripture is a chief point to be considered; on which the following observations are perhaps just and reasonable. Many passages of Scripture, which were clear to those to whom they were addressed, became obscure to those who were strangers to the phrases, idioms and customs of distant times and places. Many prophecies remain for ever obscure to those who are ignorant of history, or will not examine them; and there are wise reasons why some prophecies should be obscure until they are elucidated by events. If they were less obscure, men might employ unjustifiable means in accomplishing what was predicted,

ed, and clearly considered as the will of CHAP.  
God. If certain prophecies were more III.  
clear than they are, men would act so as  
to fulfil them; and then the fulfilment might  
be ascribed to design or contrivance. Were  
they more plain, men would, in many cases,  
endeavour to prevent the accomplishment,  
and oblige God to interpose miraculously to  
destroy the liberty of human actions. Were  
the circumstances of events clearly foretold  
in the Scriptures, some would be in haste  
to accomplish them; and others so perverse  
as to counteract their completion. On the  
contrary, the accomplishment of prophe-  
cies, without the knowledge of the persons  
concerned in them, evinces the prophetic  
spirit, which dictated them, and proves  
they were not accomplished in consequence  
of the prediction. Such prophecies as  
were intended to confirm posterity in the  
truth of religion, were necessarily obscure,  
in the age in which they were delivered;  
and so were those prophecies, which related  
to the future happiness or misery of men's  
descendants. Were the fate of individuals  
and nations clearly revealed, they might  
become proud or negligent, or too anxious  
about

CHAP. about it. Men who had a clear view of  
<sup>III.</sup> the prosperity of their descendants might  
become elated with pride; and happy parents would be miserable, at a prospect of the wretchedness, which awaited their descendants. Sometimes prophecies are obscure in mercy to those who are to bring about the event, and who would be miserable, if they foresaw the calamities which threatened them. If certain prophecies were not obscure, it would be difficult if not impossible to convey them to posterity. Did the Jews for instance, fully understand the prophecies concerning the destruction of their city or their own rejection, they would doubtless have suppressed them; nor would they have admitted the predictions concerning the sufferings of the Messiah, among their records, had they been more clear and explicit. Were every part of a revelation so irresistably clear as to overpower the senses by its evidence, there would be little room for candour, humility, or enquiry, and no merit in sacrificing men's vices, interests or prejudices. The view of heaven and hell would so fill the thoughts, as to leave no room for the business or duties of life;  
which

which was actually the case with some of the primitive Christians who had the miraculous evidence we are speaking of.

2. Spinoza urged, that the prophets prophesied according to their interest or temper; and Voltaire observes, that the Egyptians, Greek and other nations had oracles and prophecies. Some ascribed the fulfilment of prophecies to an accidental coincidence of circumstances or to shrewd conjectures; while others represented them as obscure or ambiguous, like the oracles of the Heathens. We shall perceive the feebleness of such objections, by considering the characters of the prophets; and by comparing the Scripture prophecies with the oracles of the Gentiles. The prophets did not employ this gift in promoting their own temporal interest; having denounced judgments against kings, priests and people, and having been often persecuted for their prophetic denunciations. They did not prophesy in compliance with the wishes, or natural propensities of their countrymen; but opposed their prejudices by predicting the impending calamities, the humble state of their

CHAP.  
III.

Scripture  
prophecies  
and Heathen  
oracles compared.



CHAP. their Messiah, the rejection of the Jews and

III.

the call of the Gentiles. It must be admitted, that the same prophecy sometimes admitted of a double meaning, the one civil and near and the other spiritual and remote; but it cannot be denied that these two meanings were consistent the one with the other. The prophecies tended to one end; and the total suppression of them, when that end was answered, proves they did not owe their accomplishment to chance or imposture. The Heathen oracles had no determinate scheme, and related to detached and unconnected events; while the prophecies respect one great scheme, and point to one person whose family, country, character and circumstances were exactly ascertained long before he was born. The Heathen oracles spoke what rulers dictated, or what tended to advance the interest of the priests; while the Hebrew prophets boldly reprov'd kings, and suffered rather than gained by the predictions which they uttered. The Heathen priests often framed their answers, according to the intelligence they received relative to the points on which they were consulted; while the prophets

phets were independant of any such assist-  
ance. The Heathen oracles uttered responses CHAP.  
III.  
in the temples, where the juggling priests  
had their apparatus to impose on the peo-  
ple; whereas the Hebrew prophets uttered  
them every where. *Ænomaus* (*a*) a Greek  
philosopher shewed that when some priests  
were put to the rack, they confessed their  
oracles to have been an imposture; whereas  
nothing of this kind ever was proved against  
the Jewish prophecies. The great object  
of the Pagan oracles was political; whereas  
the end of the prophecies was the glory of  
God, and the reformation of mankind.  
The Hebrew prophets described in sublime  
language the perfections of the Deity;  
while the Heathen poetry abounded with  
fables, and celebrated the amours and ex-  
ploits of the gods. All persons were enjoined  
to peruse the Scriptures; whereas only  
certain officers were allowed to superintend  
the oracles of the Heathens. In Egypt the  
oracular books were kept by the priests  
only, and written in a peculiar character;  
and in Rome they were consulted only by

(*a*) Euseb. *Præp. Evang.* lib. iv, sub initio.

CHAP. the Quindecemviri, and not even by these  
 II. without an order of the Senate. The prophets were disinterested and humane; the Heathen diviners were selfish and cruel; having commanded men to offer human victims to their gods. Tiresias promised the Thebans victory, provided Creon's son was sacrificed; and Calchas ensured success to the Greeks, if Agamemnon offered his daughter as a victim. The Messenians having consulted the Delphic oracle, concerning the event of a war between them and the Spartans; the oracle promised them victory, provided they sacrificed a virgin to the god of the chief family of the Egyptidæ (b). With respect to the obscurity of Pagan oracles and scriptural prophecies, it is to be observed, that the latter were necessarily obscure; while the former might have been clear, had the persons who uttered them any intercourse with the deity. Oracles having been generally consulted about the fate of a war, the success of a battle or some other near and single event, might have returned clear and exact re-

(b) Vide Wierus de Præstigiis Dæmonum, cap. viii.

sponses;

sponses; whereas in prophecies which re-  
garded only one great scheme of providence  
gradually unfolded in a long tract of time,  
the remote parts were necessarily obscure,  
until they were accomplished. In the mul-  
titude of Pagan oracles, some few succeeded,  
and the majority of them failed in the  
completion; while the prophecies have  
been fulfilled in numberless instances, and  
in no case convicted of falshood or impos-  
ture. The actions to which the oracles  
refer are long since past, or falsified by the  
event; whereas some prophecies, uttered  
above three thousand years ago, are now  
fulfilling in every nation of the globe.

3. The Jews having rejected their Messiah  
were deceived and ruined by following im-  
postors, of which there were near 100 (*d*);  
besides those which appeared in the time of  
Josephus (*e*). The history of these men  
would clearly prove that Jesus far surpassed  
them all in his doctrines, practice and claim  
to the Messiahship. He was innocent and

Jesus and  
the false  
prophets  
compared.

(*d*) See Leslie Theolog. Works, vol. i, p. 50, folio.

(*e*) Antiq. lib. ix, cap. 6, sect. 2.



CHAP. pure in his life and doctrines; while they  
<sup>III.</sup>  
lived by rapine, and were influenced by pride, ambition or revenge. Jesus performed miracles in the desert, as Isaiah foretold; whereas they deluded the people, by pretending to exhibit wonders in those places. The false prophets accommodated their schemes to the wishes of the people; while Jesus opposed the prejudices of his countrymen. By his humble appearance he opposed their prepossessions concerning the grandeur of the Messiah; expressly declared for an universal religion, instead of a national one; preferred a spiritual worship to a ritual, and a strict morality to Pharisaical austerities. They were vain and ostentatious; whereas he often concealed his miracles, forbade Peter, James and John to mention his transfiguration 'till he was risen from the dead, and enjoined silence on the demoniac who called him the holy one of God. He could not have concerted an imposture with his kinsmen, who did not acknowledge him to be a prophet, nor with John the Baptist who did not know him, 'till he came to be baptized. Christianity was not a political contrivance; as its author was put to death  
by

by the Heathen and Jewish rulers, and CHAP.  
III.  
was discouraged, if not persecuted, by every government for three hundred years. Jesus promised his disciples that they should  
“ cast out devils, speak with new tongues,  
“ take up serpents, lay hands on the sick  
“ and they shall recover :” and we may be sure an impostor would not have made a promise, the non-performance of which must soon have detected his folly and imposture. He freely rebuked the wealthy and the powerful ; and his doctrines tended to give them an aversion for his religion. To one who asked him what he should do to inherit eternal life, he thus answered ;  
“ if thou wilt be perfect, go sell what  
“ thou hast and give to the poor, and thou  
“ shalt have treasure in heaven, and come  
“ take up the cross and follow me.” If he was an impostor, he was the only one that ever spoke in this manner to those whom he wished to gain over to his party. He discoursed on the danger of wealth, represented the rich man as lifting up his eyes in hell torments, refused to be made a king, discouraged in his disciples all hopes of temporal greatness, and even repeatedly  
N foretold

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foretold the troubles which awaited them. Multitudes of Jews, who rejected him during his life time, received him as their Messiah; and embraced his religion, after his death and resurrection. An impostor on the contrary might have had many followers, during his life; but his death would have undeceived them, and put an end to his imposture.

The arguments  
from miracles and  
prophecies  
compared.

4. The arguments from miracles and prophecies have each of them peculiar force, in proving the truth of the old and new Testament. The completion of several prophecies is a standing proof; and renders us as certain of the truth of revelation, as they were who saw the miracles of Moses or Christ. The ancients who saw the miracles had reason to believe that the prophecies would be accomplished; just as the moderns who see them fulfilled have, besides other arguments, a strong presumption that miracles were performed. The arguments from miracles, depending on written testimony, will at all times be equally forcible; while that from prophecies is constantly growing stronger, by fresh instances of their completion.

completion. Prophecies were not intended CHAP.  
III.  
to instruct men in regard to future events ;  
but to induce them to acknowledge God  
the author of them, when they come to  
be fulfilled. Miracles at once convince  
the mind ; while prophecies do not give  
immediate conviction, but the means of  
conviction to such as in due time shall com-  
pare predictions with events.

5. It must be a matter of surprize that the  
Heathens rejected the miracles of the Chris-  
tians ; unless we consider their opinions,  
prejudices and total inattention to other  
matters of importance. Of all the opinions  
of the Heathens, none was so effectual in  
preventing them from ascribing miracles to  
God, as the notion that they were perform-  
ed by demons or spirits. The Heathens be-  
lieved in magic (*f*) ; and Plato (*g*) and  
Apuleius (*h*) ascribed extraordinary powers  
to demons or inferior Gods. That the Hea-  
thens ascribed extraordinary effects to magic,  
fully appears from the following observa-

*Causes of  
the rejec-  
tion of  
Christian  
miracles  
by the  
Heathens.*

(*f*) Vide Hoffman's Lexicon, vox Magia.

(*g*) De Symposio, p. 202, Edit. Serrani.

(*h*) De deo Socritis, p. 102 Edit. Basil.



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tions. When Apollonius Tyanæus was tried before Domitian, he thus addressed the emperor: if I am a magician, how will you bind me? and if you bind me, how am I a magician? Apollonius to convince Damis it was not in the power of men to tie him, pulled the chain off his leg: on which Damis replied, if you are not a magician, how was your leg freed? but if it was freed, how are you not a magician (*i*)? The doctrine of demons was so connected with magic, that Eusebius (*k*) challenged those, who considered Jesus as a magician to prove, that he ever implored the aid of demons in the miracles he performed. Julian (*l*) mentions Paul as the greatest of magicians; and thus acknowledges his power and the cause to which he ascribes it. Hence the Heathens might believe extraordinary things, when they had a system to explain them; while men, who ascribed miracles to magic, were prevented from accounting for them in any other way. The oracles and popular religion had a considerable ten-

(*i*) Philostrat. lib. vii, or Euseb. adv. Hieroclem ad calcem Demonstr. Evang. (*k*) Ib. (*l*) Cyril. contra Julian, lib. iii, p. 100, Edit. Lut. 1638.

dency to bring miracles into disrepute. CHAP.  
III. Oracles, which had a miraculous appearance, some considered as human contrivances : while others attributed them to the interposition of demons. The former of these opinions tended to make all miracles suspected ; the latter prevented men from ascribing them to God : and the popular mythology necessarily led to a disregard of the miracles of the Christians. They who had heard of the powers of *Æsculapius* could not be surprized at a miraculous cure ; nor could any person, who believed that *Juno*, *Eolus* or *Neptune* could shake the earth, be alarmed at a sudden convulsion of nature, or a conflict of the elements. Gentile rulers, who were acquainted with the juggles of their priests, rejected the miracles of the Christians without examination, as most protestants would now reject those said to be wrought in Spain or Portugal. Some Heathen philosophers, by attempting to account for miracles, prevented men from ascribing them to God ; while they were necessarily rejected by those who held the atheistic doctrines of *Epicurus*. The idea of a miracle implies God's immediate interposition

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 III. position in the affairs of men; and it is reasonable to expect, that those Epicureans, who denied his providence in ordinary matters, would deny it in extraordinary ones. Some Heathens and even some Christian fathers paid little attention to miracles. Aristeas was more celebrated for his poetry than for his miracles; and Pythagoras more for his opinions and austerity, than for having been at the same time in Italy and Sicily. On the miraculous cures of Vespasian, Suetonius (*m*) only observes that they were useful to his authority; and Spartianus (*n*) relates with careless indifference, the recovery of two persons to fight by touching Adrian. Tertulian and Jerome thought it unsafe to found the truth of religion on miracles; as they were said to be wrought by false Christians, and even by some Heathens. Lactantius had so far imbibed the opinions of the Heathens, that he could have thought Jesus a magician, were it not for the accomplishment of the prophecies concerning him. However, it is undeniable that some

(*m*) In vita Vespasiani.  
 Edit. Paris, 1620.

(*n*) Hist. Aug. Scriptores, p. 10



Gentiles who saw real miracles, were converted by them; while multitudes treated them with coldness and disregard for the reasons now mentioned. The former attributed them to God; while the latter either did not attend to them, or beheld them as some do the works of nature with stupid indifference, and without thinking of the Author. God does not compel men to attend, either to the works of nature or to miracles; but denounces severe judgments against those, who reject the evidence of their senses (*p*).

6. If we compare the miracles of Moses and Christ in respect to their tendency, number and other particulars, we shall find that they agreed and differed in some material points. The miracles of each were wrought publicly, and tended to draw men off from idolatry and sin, to true religion and virtue. The miracles of Moses tended to impress the attributes of God, on the minds of men who were sunk in idolatry; while those attributes having been tolerably well known to the Heathens in Our

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The mira-  
cles of  
Moses and  
Christ  
compared.

(*p*) See Weston on the rejection of miracles.

Saviour's



CHAP. Saviour's time, his miracles served to prove  
III. his mission and as specimens of the general doctrine and practice of the Author. Jesus wrought a greater number of them than the Hebrew law-giver, and even imparted the same power to his disciples; which the latter did not. Moses inflicted plagues, and many of his miracles were executions of justice on the wicked; while most of Christ's miracles were instances of benevolence and love to the afflicted. The miracles of the Hebrew lawgiver soon disappeared, leaving not a trace behind them; whereas those of Christ had permanent effects. The course of nature tho' altered, proceeded regularly afterwards; the dead were raised to health, diseases were cured without a relapse, and men received not only their senses, but the immediate use of them, which was a miracle in itself. For, the idea of distance being acquired by experience, were a person born blind to receive his sight, he would think all objects equally near; and therefore the knowledge of distances without such experience must be truly miraculous.

7. The strongest argument of the divine authority of a revelation being drawn from miracles; we should not confound the juggles of impostors with well attested miracles wrought for great ends worthy of God. Fraud should excite our caution and not render us sceptics, prompt us to distinguish true and false wonders, and not to reject both indiscriminately without a fair examination. The chief pretenders to miracles among the Heathens were Aristeas, Pythagoras, Alexander of Pontus, Vespasian and Apollonius Tyanæus whose miracles were trifling, absurd or unworthy of God, attested by persons whose knowledge or integrity is questionable, or calculated to answer some worldly purpose. Some Heathens pretended to work miracles, in order to gratify mens passions for the marvellous; and many wonders of antiquity are so trifling as not to answer any other purpose. If we examine the miracles of Aristeas, Pythagoras and Apollonius we shall perceive that they were trifling or absurd, and wrought not to promote the honour of God or the good of his creatures. Their miracles were not designed to confirm an useful doctrine, nor to reform

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Christ's  
miracles  
compared  
to those  
of Aris-  
teas, Py-  
thagoras,  
and Alex-  
ander.

CHAP. reform mankind from superstition and vice;

<sup>III.</sup> but to gain reputation with the vulgar and to strike men with astonishment. Aristeas, who died or disappeared twice, is said to have revived or appeared at Metapontum, (g) in 340 years after his second disappearance; and his resurrection has been compared to that of our Saviour. But how absurd to compare a story which has every sign of fiction, and related only on report, with the accounts of Christ's resurrection, which had many witnesses and other proofs of its certainty (r)? Christ appeared after his death, to many persons who had known him intimately; whereas no person could be certain, that he who called himself Aristeas at Metapontum, was the same who had died 340 years before. According to Suidas (s), the soul of Aristeas went out of him and returned to him at pleasure; and Pliny (t) observes that his soul did so in the shape of a crow. As extraordinary things as these are related of Pythagoras, such as his golden or ivory thigh, his ap-

(g) Herod. lib. iv. (r) See West and Ditton on the Resurrection. (s) Art. Aristeas. (t) Hist. Nat. viii, 53.

pearance in two places at once, his prevail-  
ing on an ox not to eat beans, and on the CHAP. III.  
Daunian bear not to eat animal food, his  
calling down an eagle at the Olympic  
games, his foretelling the exact number of  
fish that was caught, and his preserving  
their lives. No great end was answered by  
these and other wonders of Pythagoras;  
and the chief person (*u*), who related them  
lived some hundred years after they were  
said to have happened. To shew the faci-  
lity of imposing false miracles on the cre-  
dulous, Hume acquaints us with the success  
of Alexander of Pontus, an interpreter of  
Æsculapius and a teller of fortunes. So  
prejudiced was this writer, that he compared  
this juggler to St. Paul; though he was a  
perfect contrast to him and to the other  
preachers of the Gospel. Alexander first  
practised his impostures among the igno-  
rant Paphlagonians; while St. Paul preach-  
ed in Rome, in Corinth, and in the Areo-  
pagus at Athens before the Stoics and Epi-  
cureans. The apostle, by introducing a  
new religion, encountered men's prejudices;

(*u*) Jamblichus de vita Pythagoræ.



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whereas Alexander founded his impostures on the established superstitions, The former preached and performed miracles before the enemies of his religion; while the latter exhibited his tricks before those of his own religion, and issued out the following proclamation, at a festival which he instituted: Away with any Christian or Epicurean who came to this feast (*b*). According to Lucian (*w*), Alexander was immoral, and enriched himself by his juggles; while St. Paul and the other Apostles were exemplary in their lives, and relinquished every temporal advantage in propagating their doctrines. Upon the whole it is undeniable, that miracles wrought in compliance with men's prejudices are more readily admitted than those which combat them; and the miracles of Christians performed among Pagans would be more closely examined, and more readily rejected if false, than those of Heathens in Gentile nations.

His miracles and those of Æsculapius compared.

8. The enemies of Christianity produce other miracles wrought among Heathens,

(*b*) Lucian Pseudomantis, p. 489, Edit. Paris, 1615.

(*w*) Ib. p. 484.

which

which seem to be as well attested as those of CHAP.  
III.  
the Christians. In the temple of Æsculapius at Epidaurus, was found inscribed on columns an account of the persons cured of diseases, and of the manner in which they were cured (*b*). In Strabo's (*c*) time it was believed that this God cured disorders; and this writer observes that his temples were constantly filled with the sick, and with tables which marked the disorders of which the patients were cured. From the inscriptions of Gruterus (*d*) it appears, that in the island of the Tiber was found a marble table, which contained an account of the remedies that cured men in the temples of this god. But the following observations evince that the miracles of Æsculapius were inferior to those of the Gospel in *number*, in *tendency*, and in the *manner* of working them. Even Æsculapius, who is said to have cured many, suffered thousands to languish for want of cure; while Christ healed all who came to him for relief. The miracles of the latter were wrought for the

(*b*) Pausan. Corinth. lib. ii, cap. 27.

(*c*) Lib. viii, p. 575, Edit. Amstelod.

(*d*) Page 71, Edit. Amstelod.

CHAP. establishment of an useful system of religion; the former to answer the purposes of designing men. The former employed medicines in curing his patients (e); while Christ often healed by a word, or by the touch of his garment. Christ communicated miraculous powers to his followers; while neither *Æsculapius* nor his priests imparted them to any person. Christ and his apostles wrought miracles among their enemies; while the miracles in the temple of that god were performed among his worshippers, and by fellow-jugglers who were interested in supporting their credit. The priests of *Æsculapius* might have erected monuments in memory of cures not wrought, or of cures wrought without a miracle; while Christ and the Apostles who performed real miracles, durst not erect monuments in memory of them.

The miracles of Christ and of Vespasian compared.

9. To abate the wonder or credit of Christ's miracles, his enemies ascribe them to various causes, or pretend that similar works were performed by mere men. Mr.

(e) Monfaucon's *Antiq.* Tom. iii. p. 247. Edit. Paris, 1621.

Hume (y) tells of miracles wrought by the emperor Vespasian which, according to this writer, are the best attested in all profane history. “ Tacitus,” says he, “ reports a “ miracle of Vespasian, who cured a blind “ man in Alexandria by means of his spit- “ tle, and a lame man by the mere touch “ of his foot; in obedience to a vision of “ the god Serapis, who enjoined them to “ have recourse to the emperor for those “ miraculous and extraordinary cures.” If we consider the origin of those cures, we shall not consider them as extraordinary or miraculous. In consequence of a prophecy, which prevailed in the East in our Saviour’s time, that an universal monarch should come out of Judea; Vespasian was encouraged by his own ambition, by Josephus, and by Apollonius Tyanæus to claim the Messiahship, and those miracles which it was expected the Messiah should perform. In Judea he met with Josephus, and in Alexandria with Apollonius, who flattered him in his pretensions and promised to assist him. During his stay in Alexandria, two

(y) Essay on miracles.

men



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men came to him to be cured ; one of blindness, and the other of lameness. The cures were said to have been wrought ; and the ambitious prince was doubtless much flattered by the performance of miracles, which marked him out as the Messiah. However, we must entertain doubts whether these miracles were ever performed ; if we consider that they were intended to encrease the influence of a prince of an obscure family, who wished to strengthen his title by the sanction of the gods. Tacitus (z) mentions those miracles, but does not say that he saw them, or even believed them to have been performed ; nay he insinuates that he did not believe them. He observes that the Egyptians adored Serapis above every other god, and that the emperor was prompted by flatterers to expect success in his intended cures. That they were the effects of fraud or flattery appears from this, that at first he refused to perform them from a diffidence of himself ; but at length wrought them, when assured that they were practicable. Some physicians told him that

(z) Hist. lib. iv, cap. 81. See also Sueton. in Vespasian.

the

the sight of the blind man was not extinct, CHAP.  
III.  
and that the joints of the lame man might recover their strength, so that the two men might have been cured without any real miracle. Alexandria having been the first city of consequence which declared for Vespasian; its inhabitants were unlikely to question his miracles, or after his death to expose an imposture, which they maintained for many years from motives of interest. Upon the whole it appears, that the miracles of Vespasian were wrought in a country where he was the favourite of the people; whereas those of the Apostles were performed among enemies to their religion. The witnesses of Vespasian's miracles were the ignorant and superstitious Alexandrians, who were violently attached to Serapis, and ready to believe a miracle, which suited their superstitions; while the witnesses of Christ's miracles delivered their testimony contrary to their own prejudices. The cures of Vespasian were performed by the suggestion of the chief god of the place; whereas those of the Christians were wrought in opposition to the popular worship of all nations. The two men with whom the emperor was  
O concerned,

CHAP. concerned, were curable by natural means;  
 III. } while a learned physician (a) maintained,  
 that the persons cured by our Saviour were  
 not curable by the medical art. The mi-  
 racles of the Apostles tended to ruin their  
 fortunes, or expose them to persecution;  
 while those of Vespasian had a tendency to  
 advance his glory or ambition. It would  
 not have been easy for the Apostles, who  
 were destitute of authority, to find vouchers  
 for pretended miracles; while a prince  
 might find men to attest miracles which he  
 had not performed.

The mira-  
 cles of  
 Christ and  
 of Apollo-  
 nius com-  
 pared.

10. Hierocles did not deny the miracles  
 of Christ; but maintained that similar or  
 greater wonders were performed by Apol-  
 lonius Tyanæus. Though rising from the  
 dead was a greater miracle, than escaping  
 from the emperor Domitian; yet did Hie-  
 rocles prefer him who escaped, to him who  
 was crucified. Had this writer considered  
 that some miracles of the Tyanæan were  
 incredible, and that his miracles in general  
 were ill attested; he could not have pre-

(a) Gul. Ader de morbis Evang. vol. ix, Critici Sacri, p.  
 366o, folio.

fumed to compare them to the miracles of CHAP.  
III.  
Christ. Apollonius was a vain and singular  
Pythagorean, who travelled through many  
regions to be gazed at and admired; and  
his fabulous account of the East Indies is  
alone sufficient to convict him of imposture.  
We know nothing of him except from Phi-  
lostratus, who flourished one hundred years  
after him, and who received his informa-  
tion of him from report, and from the  
commentaries of Damis who had been a  
companion of Apollonius. Those unpub-  
lished commentaries having been brought,  
by an acquaintance of Damis, to the em-  
press Julia, who was addicted to rhetoric;  
the empress finding them plain and inele-  
gant, ordered Philostratus to dress them.  
This writer, we may be sure, dressed them  
to the taste of one, who was fond of rhe-  
toric, and no doubt of romance which  
was fashionable in her time; so that we can  
not be certain we have one line of the ori-  
ginal commentaries of Damis. The work  
of Philostratus is in many parts romantic;  
and his stories of the Brachmans are such,  
as must destroy the credit of his other rela-  
tions. He represents those philosophers as



CHAP. keeping tubs of rain and thunder for the  
<sup>III.</sup> use of their friends, as appeasing the sea by  
a wand, performing wonderful cures, and  
presiding over banquets served up and con-  
ducted entirely by magic. In their feasts  
attendants were unnecessary; as the pots,  
cups, dishes, &c. understood each its own  
office, and ran hither and thither at the de-  
sire of the guests. He describes men and  
beasts of strange shapes, women half black,  
half white, a nation of pigmies under  
ground, beasts with the faces of men and  
the bodies of lions, and wool growing like  
grass out of the earth. The work of Phi-  
lostratus is entirely Pythagorean: and the  
filly stories related by him of Apollonius  
resemble those, which are told of Pytha-  
goras and his followers, by Diogenes Laer-  
tius, Plutarch and others; while some of  
them resemble the miracles of Christ. It  
has been said of Empedocles the Pythago-  
ran, that he stopped the Etesian winds,  
which destroyed the fruits at Agrigentum;  
by placing bottles made of ass's skin on  
the tops of the hills: and Apollonius is said  
to have stopped a plague at Ephesus, by a  
method equally ridiculous. Apollonius, like  
his

his master Pythagoras, pretended to converse C H A P.  
II.  
with beasts, and ascribed the art to his feeding on the hearts and livers of dragons. Though he conversed with the Indian king by an interpreter; yet he affected to speak all languages, without having learned them. Achilles, who was conjured out of his tomb by Apollonius, was visited by nymphs, but obliged to retire at cock-crowing; and for this fact Philostratus appealed to Apollonius, who refused to admit any witness of this miracle. Upon the whole, Philostratus ascribes to his hero miracles not wrought for any great end, and contradictory to geography, to history, and to common sense; while he blends them with some miracles which resemble those of our Saviour; to gratify, as it is supposed, the empress who hated the Christians. Had Apollonius been as famous as he is represented, Philostratus would not have complained that Pythagoras and others were remembered with reverence; while Apollonius, who was more divine, was unknown among men. Had he really performed miracles, Philostratus must have known when, how, where, or at what age he died; and need not have travelled

CHAP. travelled far and near, in search of his sepulchre. The apostles agree as to all these points, relative to their master, and attribute to him miracles different from those of Apollonius, in their object and evidence. The former were intended to establish an useful system of religion; the latter to cause wonder, and to gratify an empress who was fond of romance. The former were attested by many, who suffered for their testimony; the latter only by Damis, who suffered nothing by his evidence. The former were preached by several plain men, immediately after the death of Christ; while an embellisher, who wished to gratify an empress, related the latter in one hundred years after they are said to have been performed (\*). We are told by this embellisher that after the death of Apollonius, he was seen in a vision by one of his followers; while Christ was seen, heard and handled by many waking persons for several days after his death and resurrection. How absurd then is Mr. Blount's parallel between Christ and Apol-

(\*) See Philostrati vita Apollonii, & Euseb. contra Hieroclem ad calcem Demonstr. Evang.

lonius, who differed so widely in their mi-  
racles, characters, and other particulars? CHAP.  
III.

We have now given an account of the principal Heathens, whose miracles have been opposed to those of Christ by Deists and freethinkers. When these men find that the contrast serves Christianity; they may perhaps, cease to lament the loss of the miracles of Apuleius and others, which probably would have confirmed the truth of the Gospel, instead of subverting its foundation.

11. The impostures of certain fraudulent monks considerably injured the credit of the early miracles; as they created a suspicion that both were equally false, and impositions on mankind. True miracles obtained credit for forgeries; and the influence acquired by those who wrought the former, encouraged impostors to imitate them. By comparing the miracles of Christ and his Apostles with those of impostors in succeeding ages, we shall perceive that they differ essentially. Their different tendency might convince any man, that the former might have been true, and that the latter were false and founded

Scripture  
miracles  
and those  
of certain  
monks  
compared.



CHAP. <sup>III.</sup> founded on imposture. The former, having  
been wrought gratuitously for the use of  
men's bodies, and the improvement of their  
minds, answered no worldly purpose; where-  
as the latter tended to bring offerings to  
certain places, to gain credit for relics, and  
in general to advance the interest of indivi-  
duals. The miracles of Christ were well  
attested; while those of the monks were  
not founded on any testimony that can be  
relied on. The first Christians exhibited  
miracles publicly, before Jews and Hea-  
thens; whereas the monks performed them  
in private, and never in a single instance  
in the presence of a protestant. The for-  
mer were performed in a learned age, and  
are still admired where true learning pre-  
vails; while monkish juggles imposed on  
the ignorant, during ages of darkness. Ge-  
nuine miracles contributed to propagate the  
Gospel, and still continue its firmest sup-  
port; while monkish frauds had great  
weight in subverting the Church, when it  
was attacked by the reformers. The for-  
mer were published and appealed to, when  
and where they were performed; the latter  
long

long after the time, and far from the place CHAP. III.  
in which they were said to have been wrought. The latter might have passed unnoticed or unexamined, among persons who believed the superstitions on which they were founded; while the former, if forged, must have been detected as such, among sharp-sighted enemies. The former were admitted only at particular times and places, while the latter were received as genuine through all Christendom, from the commencement of the Christian æra, to the present time. The frauds of the monks were practised but by few of them and condemned by many of the secular clergy in every age of the Church; while the miracles of Christ were never questioned by the professors of the Gospel.

12. While controversies ran high in France between the Jesuits and Janfenists, about the middle of the eighteenth century, the Abbe de Paris a rich and zealous Janfenist gave his whole income to the poor; and clothed himself in rags, lay on the ground, fed on black bread, water and herbs, and employed watchings and penances to macerate

Scripture miracles and those of the Abbe de Paris compared.

CHAP. <sup>III.</sup>cerate his body. On his death his party canonized him, and pretended that miracles were wrought at his tomb; and these are the miracles which Mr. Hume thinks as numerous and as well attested as those of the Scriptures, though different from them in many respects. Christ enjoyed the good things of this world with temperance, and gave up his life for the benefit of mankind; while the Abbe was absurdly abstemious, and served no man by hastening his own death. The Pharisees and Sadducees, the Jewish priests and rulers would have wished to expose the miracles of Christ; while the Jansenists were interested in supporting those of the Abbe. A learned writer (*f*), who was bred among the Jansenists, observes that the miracles of the Abbe were cried up as real, before they were examined; and tried before persons inclined to favour the Apellants or Jansenists. Montgeron, who collected the cures said to be wrought at the tomb, produced vouchers only for eight or nine; while some continued at the tomb of the Abbe for days or months, with-

(*f*) Des Voeux Critique Generale du livre de Montgeron.

out receiving any benefit. The number CHAP.  
cured at the tomb was but small; nor is III.  
there any proof that this small number was  
cured by the intercession of the faint. The  
archbishop of Paris detected the imposture  
of those pretended miracles, in one signal  
instance; and the archbishop of Sens and  
others, in above twenty instances, discovered  
the artifice by which their credit was sup-  
ported. Of those who were cured, some  
used medicines, others might have grown  
better by suspending the use of them; and  
others perhaps wanted nothing but to fancy  
themselves well. The cures at the tomb of  
the Abbe were partial and gradual; those  
of the Scriptures were perfect, and gene-  
rally instantaneous. All who implored the  
aid of the Abbe were not cured; while  
Christ and the Apostles never failed in any  
case, and never were convicted of impos-  
ture in a single instance. The persons at  
the tomb of the Abbe never attempted to  
raise the dead; nor is there any evidence,  
that blind or deaf were actually cured there.  
The notary who received affidavits, relative  
to those miracles, was not obliged to know  
the names of the persons who made them,  
nor



CHAP. nor whether they gave in their own, or only  
 {<sup>iii.</sup> fictitious names (g). Mr. Des Voeux shews  
 that those cures, on which Montgeron lays  
 the greatest stress, might have been wrought  
 without a miracle; while the contrary has  
 been proved of the miracles of Jesus.  
 Christ's miracles were wrought in a simple  
 manner, without any absurd ceremonies;  
 while the Jansenists employed the earth of  
 the Abbe's tomb, and the water of the well  
 of his house in the miracles he performed.  
 Christ's miracles were intended to prove the  
 divine authority of a most excellent religion;  
 those of the Abbe to answer the purposes  
 of a party. The former answered the end  
 for which they were intended; the latter  
 raised a prejudice against Jansenism, and  
 divided its members, several of which were  
 provoked at the frauds of their party. To  
 lessen the credit of miracles, Mr. Hume la-  
 bours to shew how credulous men have been  
 in all ages, and quotes Cardinal de Retz (h)  
 for a miraculous story which was believed  
 in Spain. The cardinal tells of a man who

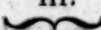
(g) See Adams and Campbell against Hume.

(h) Memoirs, vol. iii, book 4.

was said to have recovered a lame leg, by rubbing holy oil to it; and observes that this miracle was attested by the dean and canons of a cathedral at Saragossa. But miracles said to be wrought in Spain, where the prince and the priest, the learning of the schools, and the prejudices of the people conspired to gain credit for them, are not to be compared in point of credibility to the Scripture miracles which encountered the abhorrence of the priest, the despotism of rulers, the prejudice of bigots and the insolence of the learned. With respect to the credibility of miracles in general, we may lay it down as a maxim, that those wrought to confirm new opinions are more credible than those wrought in confirmation of old ones; as the former encounter men's prepossessions and are severely examined, while the latter, being consonant to their prejudices, are received without examination. How weak or wicked then are they who compare the Scripture miracles, to miracles from which they differ in so many material respects?

## CHAP. 13. The books of the New Testament

III.

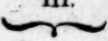
 are more credible than any ancient history ;

The Gos-  
pel history  
more cre-  
dible than  
the Greek  
or Roman.

as they have all the evidence which other ancient histories have, besides some which no other books could ever pretend to. The sacred writers and the witnesses they appeal to, voluntarily and disinterestedly endured every evil, rather than abjure a single fact; whereas no man much less a number of men ever sacrificed their lives, in attestation of the facts alleged by any Greek or Roman historian. As the Apostles relate what they saw and heard; they have an advantage of most other writers, who were not witnesses to the actions which they describe. The history of the Peloponnesian war by Thucydides, that of the Gallic by Cæsar, and that of the Jewish by Josephus are deemed more credible than other ancient histories; as the authors were present at the actions which they relate. And surely these historians would be still more credible, did they themselves or other men die martyrs to the truth of their histories. He who denied the exploits of Epaminandas or Alexander the Great would deserve to be laughed

laughed at; and surely that man is more CHAP.  
ridiculous, who denies facts which are bet- III.  
ter authenticated than the exploits of these  
heroes. The facts recorded by the Hea-  
thens were not commemorated by institu-  
tions commencing from the time that the  
actions were done; while certain Christian  
institutions prove the truth of the facts to  
which they refer. Jesus commanded his  
disciples to baptize all converts and to re-  
ceive the Eucharist in remembrance of him;  
and the rites of Baptism, and the Eucharist  
prove that he delivered his commands rela-  
tive to them. We do not question that  
there were such men as Cæsar or Catiline;  
thugh there were no rites nor public monu-  
ments to commemorate them; but surely  
matters of fact thus confirmed are more  
certain and indubitable. From what has  
been delivered in the second chapter it ap-  
pears, that no history attests matters of fact  
with so many credible circumstances and  
collateral evidences as the books of the New  
Testament. The Gospel facts are attested  
by a greater number of contemporary writers  
than profane history: for we are not to  
consider the New Testament as a single evi-  
dence,



CHAP. dence, but as several distinct testimonies  
 III.  written by different persons at different times  
 and places and afterwards collected together  
 into one book.

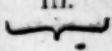
Extraordi-  
 nary things  
 of Scrip-  
 ture more  
 credible  
 than those  
 of profane  
 history.

14. There are many extraordinary rela-  
 tions in sacred and profane authors, which  
 shallow or designing men represent as equally  
 groundless; though our belief of the truth  
 or falshood of a relation should depend en-  
 tirely on the testimony of the vouchers. We  
 are told of Cleomedes whose body was not  
 found either dead or alive, of Alcmena's  
 body having vanished while it was carried  
 to the grave, and of Epimenides (*h*), who  
 revived after he had slept in a cave for fifty-  
 seven years. Plutarch (*i*) considers the first  
 two as fabulous; the last has every appear-  
 ance of a fiction; and all of them differ in  
 their tendency and testimony from the facts  
 on which Christianity is founded. Romu-  
 lus having suddenly disappeared at Rome;  
 the people were enraged, supposing he had  
 been murdered: but were appeased by Pro-  
 culus a patrician, who came forward and

(*h*) Plin. Hist. Nat. vii, 53.

(*i*) In Romulo.

declared

declared solemnly, that he saw their king CHAP.  
ascending to heaven. Though Plutarch (*k*) <sup>III.</sup>   
relates this as a fable; yet some have judged  
it deserving as much credit as the ascension  
of Christ. But there was great difference  
in the proofs of the facts in the two cases;  
the ascension of Romulus having been at-  
tested only by one witness, while that of  
Jesus had the testimony of several. It  
should also be considered, that it was easier  
to persuade men that a departed king and a  
favourite of the people was enrolled among  
the gods, than that a supposed malefactor  
rose from the grave and ascended to heaven.  
The ascension of Romulus was believed by  
those who loved him; that of Christ by  
those who had opposed his religion. In  
one case a patrician might have pretended  
he saw Romulus ascending to heaven; in  
order to appease an enraged populace:  
while the Apostles had no interest in main-  
taining the ascension of Jesus. Celsus (*l*)  
compares the apotheosis of Antinous, Adrian's  
boy, with that of Jesus; though the for-

(*k*) In Romulo.  
470, Edit. Paris, 1733:

(*l*) Orig. contra Celsum, Lib. iii, p.

CHAP. mer was vicious and impure, and the latter  
 III. deified for his miracles and virtues. Celsus  
 (m) compares our Saviour's resurrection to  
 the descents of Orpheus and Hercules into  
 hell, and of Rhampsinitus king of Egypt,  
 who descended thither to play at dice with  
 Ceres. This writer should have considered  
 that the resurrection of Christ is attested by  
 undoubted witnesses; while the stories that  
 are opposed to it are considered as fables by  
 the authors which mention them. Celsus  
 has furnished other examples of the same  
 kind, which are so remote, so obscure and  
 so ill attested, that the metamorphoses of  
 the poets are hardly more incredible.

Incompre- 15. Having proved the truth of the New  
 hensible- Testament; we may be certain of its truth  
 nefs of as to certain mysteries, which we can not  
 of Scripture explain nor comprehend. There are many  
 mysteries no argu- mysteries in geometry, arithmetic, natural  
 ment of philosophy and chymistry (n) to persons  
 their fals- who have but a superficial acquaintance  
 hood. with the sciences; and even to adepts some

(m) Orig. contra Celsum, Lib. ii. p. 429.

(n) Vide Mulleri miracula chymica & mysteria medica, &  
 Barton's Analogy.

things appear extraordinary. Persons ignorant of astronomy would think it incredible, that each star is as large as our Sun, that our sun is nearly at rest, that the earth daily turns round its axis, and annually in its orbit with incredible celerity. The ebbing and flowing of the sea and other phenomena appear mysterious to men who are ignorant of the causes; and the deists, who are generally as superficial in the sciences as in matters of religion, would doubtless consider many points mysterious which are clear to others. That the primary planets, which are retained in their orbits by the action of the sun, should begin to retire from it when its attraction is strongest, is a mystery to those who are ignorant of the cause. Magnetical, electrical and prismatic experiments, the infinite divisibility of matter and the circulation of the blood, to many appear as extraordinary as any part of the Gospel does to unbelievers. In all those cases we are certain as to the effects; but in few of them can clearly explain how the effects are produced; why then should we expect clearness in all points relating to religion? If we reject every thing that is



CHAP. liable to difficulties, we can hardly believe  
<sup>II.</sup> any thing. We can not believe we have a  
soul, as we can not explain its operations; that we have a body, as we can not give an account of its whole frame; or that there are visible objects, as we do not know exactly how we perceive them. It is as absurd to object to the Scriptures because we can not fully explain every thing in them, as to object to the demonstrations of Euclid, because this author has not been able to square the circle. We should not reject the Gospel; on account of obscurities arising from the brevity of the historian, or the nature of the subject. Clearness and obscurity are relative terms, and what is clear to one man is obscure to persons of more limited understandings. But pride is a chief cause of the scepticism of many, who are in some respects well disposed to religion and virtue. Pride induces them to imagine a point inexplicable, which they can not comprehend; though it may be clear to persons superior to them in abilities, or if not in abilities, in a knowledge of such matters.

16. Having once proved the truth of <sup>CHAP.</sup> the Scriptures, we should receive all its <sup>III.</sup> doctrines; though we can not fully comprehend the end, manner or design of them. <sup>Inability to answer all objections no just cause for rejecting the Scriptures.</sup> Objections to particular parts of Scripture should have no weight against the arguments which have been produced in the second chapter; unless those arguments could be proved weak or inconclusive. Direct and positive proofs of the truth of a proposition may satisfy us, that objections, which do not affect those proofs, are vain or groundless. Though the eternity of God has been demonstrated; yet objections have been started against it, which were never clearly answered: why then should we attend to objections to revelation, while the arguments in its support remain in full force? In such cases we should reject the objection as the offspring of error or ignorance; rather than reject proofs which can not be overturned. Those proofs render us more certain that our religion is from God; than we can be, that objections against it are strong and unanswerable. When convinced of the truth of Christianity, we should not suffer difficulties to stagger our faith

CHAP. faith or raise scruples in our minds; nor  
<sup>III.</sup>  
does the author of this work allow much weight to objections, however strong they may appear at first view. Having often surmounted difficulties which at first seemed insuperable; he hopes to do so again, in any new difficulty that occurs; and he knows that the superior understandings of other men, of angels or of God may reconcile or explain points, which to him appear strange or mysterious.

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL NOT AFFECTED BY THE OPPOSITION OR CAVILS OF THE DEISTS, WHO ARE CONVICTED OF PRIDE, IGNORANCE, PREJUDICE, FALSE REASONING OR MISREPRESENTATION.

*The truth of the Gospel not affected by the opposition of some Jews.—Nor by the silence of Josephus.—Nor by the silence of some Heathens.—Nor by the general opposition to it by the Heathens.—Nor by the opposition of Pliny, Celsus or Porphyry.—Nor by the opposition of M. Antoninus and other princes.—Nor by the apostacy of Julian.—Nor by the cavils of Lord Shaftsbury.—Nor by the cavils of Lord Bolinbroke.—Nor by the cavils of Mr. Hume.—Nor by the cavils of Mr. Voltaire.—Nor by the cavils of Mr. Rousseau.—Nor by the cavils of Mr. Gibbon. Nor by the cavils of Mr. Volney.—Defects of the deistical system of Mr. Paine and the French philosophers.—The Deists vain, insincere*

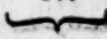


*cere and inconsistent with each other.—The Deists remarkably credulous.—The Deists less wise than the ancient sages.—The Deists less wise and respectable than the lay friends of the Gospel.*

CHAP. I.  
IV.

The truth  
of the Gos-  
pel not af-  
fected by  
the oppo-  
sition of  
some Jews.

THE prophets having foretold, and the Jews having expected a Messiah ; let us examine the motives and reasons of the Jews for rejecting him. But it is to be observed, that several Jews actually received him, and that neither the motives nor reasons of those, who rejected him are defensible. Pride, interest and prejudice prompted the high priests, Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees to oppose a person who lessened their influence ; and who required them to sacrifice wealth and pleasure for the sake of the Gospel. Our Saviour reprobated the Pharisees as a proud and ignorant sect ; and represented both them and the Scribes as hypocrites and worldlings, who forsook the law of Moses for some vain customs derived from their forefathers. The Sadducees, having maintained against the Pharisees that there is no future state, must have submitted to their opponents, if they

they admitted the resurrection of Christ: CHAP.  
they were vain and conceited, and when <sup>IV.</sup>   
once they concluded it impossible, rejected  
it as such without further enquiry. The  
Jews were absurdly rigid, with respect to  
the observance of the sabbath; and thought  
Jesus impious in healing on that day. He  
did not abstain from meat and drink, like  
some religious men among the Jews; and  
the austere were offended at his convers-  
ing freely with those whom he came to con-  
vert. Having been a debauched and selfish  
people, they were unlikely to relish the pure  
maxims of the Gospel, or to follow a lead-  
er who could not gratify their avarice or  
ambition. Men which considered the Gen-  
tiles as unclean, were led to reject that reli-  
gion that admitted them into its commu-  
nion. Moses having proved his divine  
commission; they could not believe that an  
obscure Galilean should annul his rites, or  
that any man should be divinely commis-  
sioned, who seemed to oppose the law of  
Moses. Some Jews, having imagined that  
when Christ appeared no man could tell  
whence he came, rejected Jesus whose coun-  
try and kindred they were well acquainted  
with

CHAP. with (r): and having a foolish tradition  
IV.

that no prophet could arise out of Galilee, they were offended with Jesus who came out of that country. They fancied that the Gospel was to abolish the law; though according to their own writings God was to raise up another prophet like unto Moses, who should perfect and fulfil the law and the prophets. Though the prophets are silent as to the temporal greatness of the Messiah, and declare that he was to suffer affliction and death; yet they were persuaded from tradition that he was to be a powerful king, who would conquer their enemies and rescue them from oppression. The words of Maimonides (x) to this purpose are too remarkable to be passed over in silence. “ If there arise a king of the  
“ house of David, who is studious and ob-  
“ servant of the oral as well as written law,  
“ like his father David; if he incline all  
“ Israel to walk therein, repair its breaches  
“ and fight the battles of the Lord, this  
“ person may be presumed to be the Mes-

(r) See Whitby on John vii. 27. (x) De Regibus & bellis  
ch. xi. sect. 4. See also Porta Mosis p. 158, Edit. Oxon. 1655.

“ siah,

“ siah. But if he prosper in what he un-CHAP.  
“ dertakes, subdue all the neighbouring IV.  
“ nations, rebuild the sanctuary in its for-  
“ mer place, and gather together the dis-  
“ persed of Israel, then certainly he is the  
“ Messiah.” We learn from Josephus that  
many took advantage of the popular opi-  
nion and claimed the Messiahship; nor can  
it be doubted but Jesus would have done  
so, had he been an impostor. But instead  
of pretending that he was sent for temporal  
purposes, he declared his kingdom was not  
of this world, and expressly foretold his own  
sufferings and death. Even the Apostles  
were so far persuaded of his temporal great-  
ness, that two of them requested to sit the  
one on his right hand, and the other on his  
left hand in his kingdom. The meanness  
of his birth and his humble appearance  
were inconsistent with the ideas entertained  
of the Messiah; nor would pride suffer ma-  
ny of them to sacrifice their ancient religion  
to that of the carpenter’s son. Though  
prosperity was the chief sanction of the  
Old Testament; yet was he so far from  
promising it to his followers, that he blessed  
the poor and declared the difficulty of the  
rich



CHAP. rich man's entrance into heaven. Carnal

IV.

men, having considered poverty and disgrace as marks of God's displeasure, and not instances of his love; many were prevented from examining the Gospel, whose author and first converts were cruelly persecuted. Having those causes of dislike to Jesus and his religion; they formed several weak or absurd excuses for rejecting him, which are exhibited by a very learned and ingenious author (a). In succeeding ages, the Jews were prevented from embracing the Gospel, by the heresies and quarrels of its professors, by the cruelties exercised against them by nominal Christians, by the dreadful curses which the Jews poured out on apostates, by the use of images, and by the forfeiture of a part of their estates when they were baptized.

Nor by the  
silence of  
Josephus.

2. Some have thought it extraordinary that a learned and respectable author, who lived soon after Christ, should be totally silent about him and his religion. But the following observations may convince us that

(a) Leslie's Theolog. Works, vol. i, p. 79, 80, folio,

the silence of Josephus was wilful, and CHAP.  
clearly the result of prejudice or policy. W.

The New Testament having been published in the Roman empire, and its professors persecuted in Rome in the time of Josephus; we can not suppose him a stranger to several remarkable events recorded in it. We may be sure that a Jewish priest would have detected, if he had been able, the fallacy of the Christian system, which was opposite to his own prejudices, and to the wishes of Vespasian who claimed the Messiahship. As a Pharisee, he was interested in opposing Jesus who condemned his sect, and a Gospel which stigmatized them as suborners of false witnesses, in respect to the resurrection. Josephus mentions five false messiahs, speaks of John the Baptist and of James the brother of Jesus; but is silent about Jesus, who was more remarkable than either of them. But if unable to expose Christ and his religion, his silence was judicious; since a relation of facts which could not be disproved must have displeased the Jews and the emperor Vespasian, to whom, tho' not a Jew either by education or descent, this writer applied the prophecies concerning

CHAP.  
IV.

ing the Messiah. Having flattered the ambition of this emperor, he must have been silent relative to Jesus, and other pretenders to the Messiahship; unless he could prove their pretensions to be groundless. A proof of this kind would have flattered Vespasian; by weakening the claim of his rival, who had numerous followers in all parts of the empire. Upon the whole it appears, that the silence of Josephus, concerning a religion to which he could not have been a stranger, is an argument of his inability to confute that religion, which prejudice and policy engaged him to overthrow.

Nor by the  
silence of  
some Hea-  
thens.

3. It is undeniable that some Heathen writers are silent about Christianity, or but slightly mention either it or its professors. But their silence or indifference is no argument against its truth. The Scriptures do not mention either the siege of Troy, or the building of Rome; nor does Herodotus or Thucydides mention the Romans. If therefore the silence of contemporary writers concerning the Gospel be an argument against its truth; the same argument is conclusive against the wars of the Carthaginians

ginians and Romans, which are scarcely CHAP.  
mentioned by the contemporary Greek his-  
torians. Some might have been silent about  
Christianity; that they may not raise scrup-  
les about the ancient religion, or perhaps  
from an opinion that silence about new  
doctrines was the most effectual mode of  
stopping their progress. Several Heathen  
writers were satisfied with the ancient super-  
stitions, and made no enquiries, of which  
we have an account, concerning the Chris-  
tian religion. Judea was distant from the  
parts where the writers lived; and accounts  
of miracles, said to be wrought in Judea,  
were little attended to by persons, who  
thought the Jews credulous and superstitious.  
The miracles of the Christians, having been  
ascribed to magic, were judged unworthy  
of the attendance of those naturalists and  
historians, who were not present when they  
were performed; and it is improbable, that  
they would have related the report of mi-  
racles said to be wrought by those, whom  
they hated and despised. Some, who ex-  
amined the proofs of Christianity, became  
converts to it; while others disregarded it,  
from an opinion that the Christians were  
enthusiasts,



CHAP. enthusiasts, or a sect of the Jews. Gallio,

IV.

deputy of Achaia, confounded the Jews and Christians, and refused to interfere in their disputes; as a mere question of words, or as a difference among the Jews about their own religion: and the same cause might have prevented Seneca Gallio's brother from attending to Christianity. Nero having persecuted the Christians; neither Seneca nor Plutarch dared to have made favourable mention of them; while either of them might have gratified this prince, by convicting them of imposture. The historical or philosophical studies of these authors did not lead them to mention the Christians, or to attend to their opinions; and even Tacitus, Suetonius, Macrobius and other Heathen writers who mention Christianity, do it but incidentally: their respective subjects not leading them to speak particularly about it. If these writers did not examine the evidences of Christianity, their silence does not injure its credit; if they knew it to be true, prejudice or policy might have prevented them from declaring it: whereas if they knew it to be an imposture, there

was

was nothing to prevent them from exposing it as such.

CHAP.  
IV.  
—

4. The most general causes of opposition to Christianity by the Heathens were pride, prejudice, mistaken policy, or an imperfect knowledge of its doctrines or spirit. Some who had heard of the Christians, were not sufficiently acquainted with their doctrines; while others, to whom they were better known, had particular reasons for rejecting those doctrines. Tacitus could not have called Christianity "*exitiabilis superstitio*," a destructive superstition, nor Epictetus have imputed the intrepidity of the Christians to madness or habit, had they considered its excellent doctrines, or the motives of its professors. Epictetus should have considered, that habit could have had no influence on the first sufferers; and have examined the facts and doctrines which prompted men to renounce their ancient religion, and to endure the most grievous sufferings in support of the new. The philosopher was too proud to sacrifice his opinions to men of low life and vulgar education; while the opulent and vicious were

Nor by the  
general  
opposition  
of the  
Heathens.

Q

averse

CHAP. <sup>IV.</sup> averſe from a religion, which not only requires ſelf-denial and a contempt of the world, but chaſtity, temperance, benevolence and every virtue. Polygamy and divorce having been common among the Hea-  
thens, at Chriſt's appearance ; it is natural to ſuppoſe they diſliked that religion which prohibited both. Rulers oppoſed a ſyſtem which was hoſtile to eſtabliſhments : and, not knowing that Chriſt's kingdom was ſpiritual, were jealous of a religion whoſe founder was conſidered as a king by his followers. The bulk of the Pagan world were unwilling to change a pompous worſhip for one that was ſimple, and which required God to be worſhipped in ſpirit and truth. Hea-  
theniſm having contributed to extend the conqueſts of the Romans ; the Chriſtians, who laboured to ſubvert it, were perſecuted as atheiſts and cauſes of its decline. The Pagan worſhip having brought great gain to goldſmiths, carpenters, ſtatuaries, painters, augurs, aruſpices and other miniſters of religion ; the Chriſtians, by whom it was reprobated, were perſecuted by multitudes who ſuffered in their emoluments. There was a remarkable inſtance of this at  
Ephesus,

Ephesus, where Demetrius, who made silver shrines for Diana, complained to other silversmiths that their trade was ruined by St. Paul (*b*) who “persuaded the people “ that they are no gods which are made “ with hands.” The Christians refused to sacrifice to the Heathen gods, or to worship Heathen emperors, who were vicious and impure; and the populace were prejudiced against Christianity by its enemies, who accused its professors of promiscuous lust, incest or devouring their own children (*c*). Such accusations made some impression on the populace; nor is it probable, that the wiser sort would have had recourse to such absurd calumnies, but for want of better arguments.

5. He who considers the intolerance and credulity of some Heathens, who opposed the Gospel, can not ascribe their opposition to superior wisdom; nor think its credit injured by the opposition of men, who admitted things more incredible than the Gospel miracles or facts. No arguments could

Nor by the  
opposition  
of Pliny  
the young-  
er.

(*b*) Acts xix.

(*c*) See Kortholt's *Paganus obtricator*.



CHAP. have influenced some Heathens to renounce  
<sup>IV.</sup> their religion; for even Cicero's (*d*) Cotta  
 acknowledged, that no man shall draw him  
 off from the opinions of his ancestors rela-  
 tive to the worship of the gods. Pliny (*e*)  
 the younger, who was Trajan's lieutenant  
 in Bithynia in the year 107, shamefully  
 persecuted the Christians of his province;  
 though he acknowledged they were not  
 guilty of any crime, but an adherence to  
 their religion. But the Heathen temples  
 having been almost deserted in Pontus, Bi-  
 thynia and other places by the propagation  
 of the Gospel; this man, who was an  
 augur and interested for the priesthood,  
 feared lest the priests should be deprived  
 of their usual emoluments; or perhaps  
 dreaded a change in the political system,  
 which was connected with the religious.  
 He was so credulous and superstitious that  
 he maintained the reality of apparitions  
 (*f*), devoutly addressed thanksgivings to  
 Jupiter, and erected a statue of brass to

(*d*) Tull. de nat. Deor. iii. 2.

(*e*) Lib. x. Epist. 97.

(*f*) Lib. vii. Epist. 27.

this

this God (*g*). He rebuilt a temple at Tifer-<sup>CHAP.</sup>  
num (*h*) at his own expence, and ano-<sup>IV.</sup>  
ther to Ceres (*i*) on his own estate; and  
advised Maximus Tyrius to revere the Gods,  
to respect the ancient glory of the people,  
and to regard their antiquity, their great-  
ness and even their fables. In describing  
the river Clitumnus he says (*k*), “ near it  
“ stands an ancient and venerable temple,  
“ wherein is placed the river god Clitum-  
“ nus, clothed in a splendid robe, whose  
“ immediate presence the prophetic oracles  
“ there delivered sufficiently testify.” But  
Pliny was not only superstitious himself,  
but assures us that Trajan placed his prede-  
cessor Nerva among the Gods; not to please  
the people, nor out of respect to the deities  
nor to derive honour to himself, but because  
he believed him to be a god (*l*). Such  
was the credulity of Pliny and the em-  
peror Trajan! Nor is it any disgrace to  
Christianity to have been rejected by men,  
who were intolerant, credulous and extreme-  
ly superstitious.

*(g)* Lib. iii. Epist. 6.*(h)* Lib. iv. Epist. 1.*(i)* Lib. ix. Epist. 39.*(k)* Lib. viii. Epist. 8.*(l)* Plin. *Pæneg.* cap. xi.

• CHAP. 6. Celsus, a learned Epicurean, loaded  
 IV. christianity with calumnies ; having been  
 Nor by the provoked to see the providence of God,  
 opposition of Celsus and Por- and a future state maintained against his sect.  
 phyry. He denied the resurrection from the grave,  
 which supposes souls destitute of flesh and  
 blood ; a supposition quite contrary to the  
 Epicurean philosophy. He was the first,  
 who wrote against christianity about the  
 middle of the 2d. century, borrowed from  
 the Jews several calumnies against Christ  
 and his followers, and was so unfair a dis-  
 putant, as to have imputed to the orthodox  
 the absurdities of the heretics. Having been  
 violently attached to epicurism and genti-  
 lism ; he disliked christianity, which tended  
 to subvert them ; and believed many things,  
 which every unprejudiced man must consider  
 as fabulous. “ Now, says Origen (*m*), let  
 “ us observe some of the strange things al-  
 “ leged by Celsus, which tho’ incredible  
 “ in themselves are believed by him if we  
 “ may credit his word.” Such are his  
 stories of Aristeas who, after he wonderfull-  
 ly disappeared, was seen again, visited many

(*m*) Adv. Celsum Lib. iii. p. 449. Edit. Paris 1733.

regions and related the wonders, which he CHAP.  
IV.  
saw in them. He tells of Clazomanus, whose soul left his body and wandered about without it, and of Cleomedes who, when he was shut up in a chest, held it fast : yet when it was opened, he was not found in it, having escaped by some divine power. Christianity was violently opposed also by Porphyry a zealous Pythagorean, who flourished in the year 270 : but it does not suffer in its credit, by the opposition of a man who wanted patience to hear any thing that clashed with his prejudices. He asked why the Christians endured martyrdom for a crucified man ; but rejected their religion without enquiring into the reasons of their adherence to it. He fancied, that all, who prayed to the Gods should abstain from animal food ; lest the soul of the brute should enter into the man (n). He wished to eat the hearts of such animals, as possessed a prophetic spirit ; and thought that the demon which attends men makes a part of the soul (o). Such was the credulity of some

(n) Jambl. de Myst. Sect. v. Cap. 1.

(o) Porph. de Abst. Et. Epist. ad Anabonem.



CHAP. philosophers who rejected christianity, and  
 IV. who, by their fables, confirmed instead of  
 abating the prejudices of the people !

Nor by the  
 opposition  
 of M. An-  
 toninus  
 and other  
 princes,

7. It was not want of evidence but mistaken policy, prejudice or want of consideration, which prevented several princes from embracing the Gospel. Heathen emperors did not oppose it from a sense of its falshood ; but from political views or an attachment to paganism. Christianity is honoured by the opposition of Nero, and not disgraced by the opposition of Domitian and Trajan who opposed it from a jealousy of our Saviour's kindred who were of the line of David (*p*) ; from whom it was expected the Messiah or universal Monarch should spring. The emperor Maximin, having assassinated Alexander Severus the protector of the christians, dreaded this sect and opposed their religion ; and Dioclesian opposed it, instigated by a superstitious mother, and from a dislike to the christians who were charged with setting fire to his palace (*q*). M. Aurelius was

(*p*) Euseb. Hist. iii. 32;  
 ent. Cap. xi. p. 22,

(*q*) Lact. de Mort. Perse-

zealous for paganism, from an affectation of CHAP.  
being a 2d. Numa; and a vehement zeal IV.  
for gentilism prompted Decius to reject the  
Gospel. M. Antoninus, having despised  
the christians as mean and unphilosophical,  
and hated them for surpassing the stoics in  
patience and magnanimity, suffered them  
to be persecuted. He was ignorant of their  
doctrines and prejudiced against a religion,  
which tended to subvert the dogmas of his  
philosophy, and the worship of the gods  
to which he was bigotted from his child-  
hood. At the age of eight years, he was  
introduced into the college of the priests  
called Salii; and became so expert in the  
rules of the order, that he was able to dis-  
charge the functions of the priesthood. He  
was educated in a stoical school, wore the  
habit of a philosopher and practised several  
austerities of the stoic sect. Before the com-  
mencement of a war with the Marcomanni  
he performed lustrations, convened priests  
to offer sacrifice, had faith in dreams; and  
ascribed to them the stoppage of a spitting  
of blood, and the entire cure of a dizziness  
in his head. He hated the scriptures, which  
tended

CHAP. tended to subvert his philosophy and religion;  
 IV. on; and was probably prejudiced against it by the Heathen philosophers and priests, who no doubt pointed their lectures against miracles that great argument of the truth of the Gospel. “ From Diognetus, says this emperor (r), I have learned not to busy myself about vain things, not to give credit to wonder workers and stories of incantations, expelling demons and the like.”

Nor by the  
 apostacy  
 of Julian.

8. A bigotted attachment to the ancient superstitions, and the circumstances of Julian's education were the chief causes of his apostacy from christianity to paganism. This emperor was initiated early into Heathenism; and intimately acquainted with several grammarians, poets, orators and philosophers who hated christianity. Superstition and pedantry were the chief sources of his opposition to it, and the violence of the Arians and Athanasians encreased his dislike to it. This philosophic prince sacrificed every morning to Minerva in his closet, prayed to the sun and to the mother

(r) M. Anton. de rebus suis. Lib. i. sub initio.

of

of the Gods, and imagined the solar rays CHAP.  
IV.  
to be acts of the divine spirit. He practised  
augury and divination, said Jupiter gave  
him a sign in his prayer, and that *Æscula-*  
*pius* frequently cured him of sickness. Hav-  
ing implored the Gods to inform him,  
whether he should send a letter to his em-  
press; he was told if he did he must lose  
his life (*f*). He was so addicted to sacri-  
fices, that it was said the whole race of bulls  
must be destroyed, if he returned victorious  
from Persia (*t*). According to Libanus (*u*)  
“ he received the rising sun with blood and  
“ attended him again with blood at his set-  
“ ting. Because he could not go abroad as  
“ often as he would, he made a temple of  
“ his palace and placed altars in his garden,  
“ —By frequent devotions he engaged the  
“ gods to assist him in war, worshipping  
“ Mercury, Ceres, Mars, Calliope, Apollo  
“ and Jupiter in the temple, upon the hills  
“ and in the city.—Complaining of the gods  
“ who deserted him, whom shall we blame,

(*f*) Cyril adv. Julian, Lib. vii. Oratio v. in Deorum ma-  
trem & oratio in S. P. Romanum & Epist. xxxviii.

(*t*) Amm. Marcell. Lib. xxv. (u) Opusc. p. 170 &  
245, Edit. Lut. 1627.

“ says



CHAP. " says Libanius? not one but all: none

IV.

" were neglected by him, neither gods nor  
 " goddesses. And is this the return for all  
 " his victims, all his vows and for all the  
 " incense and blood offered up to them by  
 " day and night? Wherever there was a  
 " temple whether in the city or on the hills  
 " or on the tops of mountains; no place  
 " so rough or difficult of access, but he  
 " ran to it, as if the way was smooth and  
 " pleasant; if it had a temple or ever had  
 " one." Yet this devout prince was angry  
 with his gods if he met any disappointment,  
 and once called Jupiter to witness, he  
 would never again offer a sacrifice to Mars.  
 The following passage of a very learned  
 writer (w) evinces, that this superstitious  
 prince misunderstood the doctrines and rites  
 of Christianity; or was prompted by zeal  
 for his own religion shamefully to misre-  
 present them. " Whosoever is a ravisher, a  
 " murderer, guilty of sacrilege or of any  
 " other abomination, says he, let him come  
 " boldly. For when I wash him with  
 " water I will immediately make him clean

(w) Phileleuth Lipsiensis Rem. xliii.

" and

“ and innocent; and if he commits the CHAP.  
“ same crimes again, I will make him after <sup>IV.</sup> }  
“ he has thumped his breast and beat his  
“ sides as clean as before.—A ridiculous  
“ and stale banter, says Dr. Bentley, used  
“ by Celsus and others before upon the  
“ Christian doctrine of baptism and repen-  
“ tance and remission of sins.—Baptism is  
“ rallied as mere washing, and repentance  
“ as thumping the breast and other outward  
“ grimace; the inward grace and the in-  
“ trinsic change of mind are left out of the  
“ character.—And yet the banter came  
“ more decently from Celsus an Epicurean,  
“ than from Julian the most bigotted crea-  
“ ture in the world. He to laugh at ex-  
“ piation by baptism, whose whole life  
“ after his apostacy was a continued course  
“ of washings, purgations, expiations with  
“ the most absurd ceremonies! Addicted to  
“ the whole train of superstitions, omens,  
“ prayers, prodigies, spectres, dreams, vi-  
“ sions, auguries, oracles, magic, theurgic,  
“ psychomantic: whose whole court in a  
“ manner consisted of haruspices, sacrifi-  
“ culi and philosophers as silly as they:  
“ who were always poring in the entrails  
“ of

CHAP. " of cattle to find futurities there, who it  
 IV. " he had returned victor from Persia (as  
 " his Pagan friends jested on him) would  
 " have extinguished the whole race of bulls  
 " and cows for the number of his sacrific-  
 " ces. I have drawn this character of him  
 " from his own writings and the Heathens  
 " his contemporaries; that I might not  
 " bring suspected testimonies from Chris-  
 " tian authors." He excluded from all of-  
 fices both civil and military (x) those who  
 adhered to the Gospel; and forbade them to  
 instruct children in grammar, rhetorick,  
 poetry or philosophy which would have as-  
 sisted them in combating the learning of  
 the Gentiles. Such were the principal per-  
 sons in learning and rank who opposed  
 Christianity in the first four centuries; nor  
 is it disgraced by the opposition of men so  
 interested or superstitious, who adhered to  
 their old rites and doctrines, just as several  
 refined romanists still retain some errors of  
 the ancient religion.

Nor by the  
 cavils of  
 Lord  
 Shaftsbu-  
 ry.

9. The truth of Christianity was little  
 questioned in England until after the Refor-

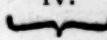
(x) Juliani Epist. xlii.

mation,

mation, when men enjoyed religious liberty CHAP.  
which was denied them before. Ever since <sup>IV.</sup>  
that period, it has been opposed by different  
persons who were generally called deists;  
for believing in God and in natural religion,  
while they rejected revelation. In the fol-  
lowing pages we pass over in silence those  
deistical writers (y) which are almost for-  
gotten; and confine our animadversions to  
those which still find readers, namely,  
Shaftsbury, Bolinbroke, Hume, Voltaire,  
Rousséau, Gibbon, &c. The Earl of Shafts-  
bury possessed a lively imagination and a fine  
taste, was an elegant writer, entertained sub-  
lime ideas of virtue, and maintained against  
Hobbes, the natural difference between good  
and evil, and the fitness of man for reli-  
gion, for society and for mutual love. He  
so often speaks with respect of Christianity,  
that some will not allow him to be a deist;  
though the general tenour of his writings  
proves that he is not to be ranked among its  
friends. Sometimes he represents Christia-  
nity as a civil establishment; and as having  
no foundation, but the authority of the

(y) Leland's view of the deistical writers specifies those  
deists and the authors which refuted them.



CHAP. state: though it is not accommodated to the  
 IV.  views of politicians, nor was it established  
 by any prince for three hundred years after  
 it was promulgated. On other occasions  
 he insinuates that Christianity was only a  
 scheme of the clergy to raise themselves to  
 power; though if that had been the case  
 we should find it calculated to advance the  
 temporal interest of its teachers. He denies  
 that we have any ground for believing that  
 miracles were wrought, except the authority  
 of rulers and of the clergy appointed by  
 the state. But surely miracles were believed,  
 before the clergy had any interest in sup-  
 porting them; and long before Christianity  
 was established by Constantine. Celsus,  
 Lucian, Hierocles and other enemies of  
 Christianity admitted them to have been  
 wrought; but denied them to be proofs  
 of divinity or ascribed them to magic and  
 other causes. He ridicules several things in  
 holy writ, and maintains that ridicule is a  
 test of truth, and that it is impossible to  
 ridicule what is just and true: not consider-  
 ing that justice, chastity and charity may be  
 turned into ridicule. Truth requires not  
 the aid of false arguments; and experience  
 evinces

evinces that wit and ridicule, so far from **CHAP.**  
being tests of truth, are generally employed **IV.**  
on the side of falshood. He sometimes admits that the hope of future rewards and the dread of future punishments is in many instances a great support to virtue; and on others represents the doctrine of futurity injurious to society, by diverting men's attention from the things of this world to those of the next. But surely Christianity requires men to perform moral and social duties; and does not promise to reward them in the next world unless they practise virtue in this. Lord Shaftsbury represents the hope of future happiness, as having a tendency to render men selfish and narrow-spirited; though it actually tends to expand the heart, and to raise it above the petty interests of this world. His Lordship considers the Gospel as defective; in not enjoining valour, patriotism and friendship. The Gospel could not expressly enjoin these virtues, without considerable inconvenience; but it requires the qualities on which they are founded. It inspires gentleness, generosity and a contempt of danger and of death, which are the most essential ingre-

R

dients

CHAP.

IV.

prescribes the qualities on which friendship is founded, namely intrinsic goodness and charity and indulgence to the faults of others. The Gospel, by enlarging the heart and affections, renders men disinterested; and forbids pride, avarice and luxury which have been destructive to governments. Different writers (*i*) have exposed the other false opinions, false reasonings and unfair insinuations of this author, who probably never examined the evidences of Christianity, or perhaps disliked it for being too great a restraint on his dissolute morals. "I believe Shaftsbury," says king Charles II. "thou art the wickedest fellow in my dominions: to which with a low bow and a grave face the Earl replied, may it please your Majesty, of a subject I believe I am" (*k*)."

Not by the  
cavils of  
Lord  
Bolin-  
broke.

10. Lord Bolinbroke possessed good talents and a good deal of learning; but did not employ either for the benefit of mankind. He was unfortunately led into many errors;

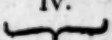
(*i*) Brown, Berkley, Warburton, Balguy Leland's deistical writ.

(*k*) Brit. Plut.

by a desire of being thought superior to CHAP.  
IV.  
other learned men in wisdom and know-  
ledge. Though few of his opinions were  
new; yet he affected to be an original  
writer and to enlighten mankind by new  
discoveries. This dogmatical and self-  
sufficient writer expressed great contempt  
for chronologers, antiquarians, compilers  
of dictionaries, for Heathen philosophers and  
Christian divines, for lawyers and senators,  
for religion and government. However,  
the general tendency of his works was to  
weaken or destroy the evidences of Chris-  
tianity; by false opinions, false reasonings,  
false assertions and by other ways unworthy  
of a wise and good man. To shew how  
easily Moses might have imposed laws on  
the Hebrews, this deist mentions the ease  
with which the divine authority of the Ko-  
ran was established among the Arabs; a  
people he says as capable of judging of Ma-  
homet and his book, as the Israelites to judge  
of Moses and his book. But there was great  
difference in the two cases. Moses founded  
his divine authority on miracles wrought  
in the presence of thousands; while Numa,  
Mahomet and other lawgivers acquired such



CHAP.<sup>IV.</sup> an influence as to make men believe they had a divine commission. Other lawgivers did not appeal to miracles; knowing that such appeals, if unsupported by facts, must have detected their imposture. All ancient lawgivers except Moses founded their religious systems on the prejudices of their people; while Moses opposed the idolatries which prevailed among the Israelites. His Lordship represents the Hebrews as shut up in a small corner, and unlikely to have received a revelation for enlightening mankind; though they were well situated for communicating knowledge to other nations, and in the centre of the known world. On one side of Palestine were Egypt and Arabia; on the other Syria, Chaldea and Assyria, among whom the first great empires were erected: and it lay near Tyre and Sidon, from whence ships carried merchandize to the most remote nations. His Lordship has observed, that the Egyptian and Jewish priests were entrusted with the public records; and asks with what face can we question the authenticity of the Egyptian accounts, which were compiled and preserved by the Egyptian priests, when we receive

receive the Old Testament on the faith of CHAP.  
the Jewish scribes? However the two cases <sup>IV.</sup>   
differed exceedingly: the Egyptian laws  
and records having been wrapt up in hieroglyphics intelligible only to the priests;  
whereas the Mosaic law was written in the  
vulgar tongue and committed not only to  
the Jewish scribes, but to all the people  
who were required to meditate on it and to  
teach it to their children. He complains  
that the principal facts of the Old Testament  
are not confirmed by collateral testimony:  
though few histories have such testimony,  
and though the Mosaic history necessarily  
wanted contemporary testimony; having  
been written long before any history now  
extant in the world. However we find that  
Diodorus Siculus, Berosus, Sanchoniathon,  
&c. confirm the Mosaic account of the  
deluge, ark, confusion of languages, fire of  
Sodom and other events; though doubtless  
these accounts were borrowed from tradition  
or from the Mosaic history. He says we  
can not admit Moses's testimony of the  
beginning of the world as divine, without  
absurdity and blasphemy: though his history  
of the creation does more honour

CHAP. honour to the deity, is more rational than

IV.

the Heathen cosmogonies (*c*), more moderate in point of time, and more consistent with the founding of cities and empires and with the novelty of the arts and sciences which have been discovered by men. According to Moses the world is now near six thousand years old; whereas the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Chinese (*d*), &c. while they differ among themselves, pretend to such antiquity as seems fabulous and incredible. He says it is impious to suppose, that God would be so cruel or unjust as to command the Canaanites to be exterminated. But it appears (*e*) they were exterminated for bestiality, incest and for every impurity for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed; nor was there any more injustice in employing the Israelites to destroy such men than plague, famine or fire from heaven. Besides, the Hebrews did not enter Canaan, 'till its inhabitants had forfeited it for their wickedness, and committed crimes punished by the wisest legis-

(*c*) Introd. to ancient Univ. Hist.

(*d*) Stillingfleet

Orig. Sacre Lib. i.

(*e*) Levit. xviii.

lators with forfeiture and death. They <sup>CHAP.</sup><sub>IV.</sub> were not ejected for errors of the understanding; but for crimes punished in every well regulated society, as inconsistent with the welfare of individuals and communities. To allow such crimes would be impolitic; to call restraint on such crimes persecution, would be foolish and absurd. The Canaanites were not massacred, but extinguished as a nation; for they might have remained in the land unmolested as the tributaries of the Israelites (*f*). He also thinks it was unjust to punish with death those Israelites who turned idolaters; not considering that the happiness of the nation depended on an adherence to the true worship, that the government was a theocracy, and that apostates were rebels and should be treated as such. To account for the propagation of Christianity without a miracle, he observes that no age or nation could be more prepared to adopt every theological and metaphysical notion, even the most extravagant and least intelligible, than that wherein Christianity was published; and

(*f*) Lowman's Heb. Government.

intimates



CHAP. intimates that philosophy, especially the  
 IV. Platonic, contributed greatly to the propagation of the Gospel. If this had been the case, there would have been more profelytes among the philosophers; whereas history informs us that the fact was otherwise (g). It may be a full answer, says he, to what Dr. Clarke has advanced against the sufficiency of the Heathen philosophers, for the instruction of mankind to ask, whether the reformation which they could not effect has been effected under the Jewish and Christian revelations. As to the former, it preserved the knowledge of the true God among the Hebrews, better than ever it was preserved among the Pagan philosophers: and the latter has advanced the happiness of individuals and communities, in numerous instances. The Christians refrained from many vices and barbarous customs which were common among the Heathens, and practised several virtues to which the Heathens were almost total strangers (h). This writer repeatedly acknowledges the utility

(g) See Leland's *Deist. writers.* (h) See Ryan's *Hist. Effects of Religion*, vol. i. sect. iii. and vol. ii. Supplem.

of that religion which he attacks ; nor can we be surprized at his inconsistency, if we consider his character. In his youth he was a dissolute rake, in his advanced age, he allowed polygamy and the grossest incoast, and was impeached for treason against his king and country (x). His character is thus concluded by Lord Chesterfield ; alas poor human nature (y) !

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11. Mr. Hume was a subtle and metaphysical writer, possessed an acute judgment and a fine taste, but often employed those talents for the purpose of amusing or perplexing his readers. He was constantly affecting to instruct mankind by new discoveries, and delighted in supporting his doctrines by plausible arguments, regardless of truth and of the good of mankind. He thinks miracles incredible ; as they are contrary to our own uniform experience, which he thinks our only guide in respect to matters of fact. But general experience has little weight against positive testimony ;

Nor by the  
cavils of  
Mr Hume,

(x) Brit. Plut.

(y) Latt. clxxv.

since

CHAP. since a fact may be true tho' contrary to it ;  
<sup>IV.</sup> and the freezing of water, tho' unknown to  
the inhabitants of the horrid zone, becomes  
credible by the testimony of a single witness.  
The proof of a miracle from testimony is  
positive ; while that against it from experi-  
ence is but negative : and the testimony of  
one primitive christian, who saw a miracle,  
is admissible against the experience of ten  
thousand who did not see it. Testimony does  
not derive its evidence from experience,  
as Mr. Hume imagined ; for if it did, then  
a man that who never saw ice or a negro  
could not believe there was either. It has  
been objected that what was deemed a mi-  
racle in one age has, in a more enlightened  
one, been discovered to be a natural effect  
or an imposture. The Greek and Roman  
histories, says the deist, relate as prodigies  
many natural events ; and the juggles of  
monks, which formerly deceived, are now  
proved to be the effects of imposture. But  
from what has been said in the 3d. chapter of  
this work, we may judge of the inferiority of  
Heathen prodigies or monkish juggles to the  
scripture miracles, which appear as extra-  
ordinary

ordinary now as in former ages, and must do CHAP.  
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so to the end of the world. It has been asked, whether it is more probable that nature should change her usual course or that man should lie? Probability has little weight against testimony, and a thing may be true, however improbable it might have appeared before it was attested; since the positive testimony of one honest man, who saw ice, a negroe or a miracle, has weight against the negative evidence of thousands who never saw any of them. We may be more certain of miracles, than of any fact in ancient history; as they have been attested by many who died or suffered tortures rather than renounce their testimony concerning them: whereas no man ever died a martyr to any fact related by the Greek or Roman historians. It is perhaps as contrary to the common course of nature, that many men should conspire in attesting false miracles the belief of which procured them neither pleasure nor advantage, as that heavy bodies should hang unsupported in the air. Notwithstanding the striking differences between the miracles of the first christians,



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tians, and the frauds of their successors ; some enemies of the Gospel have laboured to confound them. The following passages of Humes essay on miracles shew his weakness in rejecting all miracles indiscriminately, and his prejudice in rejecting them without examination. “ Should the miracle, says he, be ascribed to any new system of religion, men in all ages have been so much imposed on by ridiculous stories of that kind, that this very circumstance would be full proof of a cheat and sufficient to make all men of sense reject the fact, and ever to reject it without examination. As the violations of truth are more common in the testimony concerning religious miracles, than in that concerning any other matters of fact ; this must much diminish the authority of the former testimony, and make us form a general resolution never to lend any attention to it, with whatever specious pretext it may be covered.” Such was the prejudice of this pretender to free enquiry, who rejects without examination the proofs of religion, and the testimonies of facts however specious they

they may be ! With respect to the impossi-  
tion on men in all ages, by ridiculous stories  
of miracles ascribed to new systems of reli-  
gion ; he should have known that no reli-  
gion was ever attended with miracles, at its  
first establishment, except the Law and the  
Gospel ; which are but parts of the same  
plan dispensed to mankind at different  
times, as occasion required it. Neither the  
Pagans, nor Mahometans nor the christian  
reformers ever attempted to found a new  
religion on miracles. The genealogies,  
amours and exploits of the Heathen Gods  
are not miracles : the fables relative to these  
were invented long after the facts they allude  
to are supposed to have happened : and the  
Heathens had so little regard to facts, that  
they spoke confidently of things done in  
heaven, in hell and in the ocean. The  
pretended miracles of Aristeas, Alexander,  
Appollonius and others are ill attested, and  
wrought not to confirm or establish any im-  
portant doctrine. Mahomet did not pre-  
tend to found his divine commission on mi-  
racles (1) ; for tho' the Koran contains some

(1) Marc. Prodrumi ad refutationem Alcoran, Pars ii. Ch. 3.

things,

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things, which if true would be miraculous, such as the visits of the angel Gabriel, his converse with the moon, his night journey, &c. yet he was too wise to found his claim to divinity on facts of which there was no evidence. He first had the address to persuade his followers that he was a prophet; in consequence of which persuasion they afterwards believed things of him, which no persons pretended to have seen or heard. According to Hume, it is easy for a cunning and impudent man to impose on the credulous by forged miracles. Were this the case, the ignorant Arabs were likely to be duped by Mahomet who had a head to concert and resolution to manage an imposture, and every inducement to attempt it, if he thought he could have succeeded. His friends and enemies required him to work miracles, as proofs of his divinity; but he prudently declined it, knowing the danger of attempting to deceive even unenlightened Barbarians, some of which might be so sagacious as to discover the cheat. An imposture was more practicable in Arabia, than in the refined nations where the miracles of Christ and the

the Apostles were displayed. The frauds of CHAP.  
artful monks having been generally detect-<sup>IV.</sup>  
ed even in Christian countries; it would  
have been impossible for simple men like  
the Apostles to impose on the Jews and  
Gentiles who were prejudiced against them  
(*m*). From what has been said we may  
perceive, that little stress is to be laid on  
the opinions of a writer who employs false  
arguments against that religion which he  
allows to be beneficial to society (*n*).

12. Mr. Voltaire possessed a sprightly ge-  
nius, a pleasing style, a great deal of know-  
ledge and on many occasions, noble and  
just sentiments. But it is to be lamented,  
that he frequently employed his talents, in  
defending false and erroneous opinions. He  
maintains (*o*) that among the Greeks So-  
crates alone was persecuted for his opinions;  
and that the Romans never persecuted any  
person for his way of thinking from Ro-  
mulus to Domitian. But surely the Persians  
(*p*) punished men for foreign worship; the

Nor by the  
cavils of  
Voltaire.

(*m*) See Campbel and Adams against Hume. (*n*) Essays  
sect. xi. (*o*), Treatise on Toleration. (*p*) Joseph. adv.  
App. Lib. ii. cap. xviii.

Athenians



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Athenians allowed no alteration in the religion of their ancestors (*q*); and a law of Draco (*r*) required men to worship the gods and heroes of their country, according to the established rites. Antiochus (*s*) persecuted the Jews for refusing to adopt the Grecian religion and customs; and the Grecian laws prohibited any person to rank foreign gods among the true and known ones (*t*). Theodorus (*u*) was persecuted for having impiously slighted the established superstitions; Aristotle (*w*) fled from a dread of being persecuted for impiety; and the Athenians offered a reward for killing Diagoras (*x*), who had expressly denied the existence of the gods. Romulus prohibited the worship of any strange god, except Faunus (*y*); and the laws of the twelve tables (*z*) expressly forbade foreign superstitions. In the year of Rome 325, the Roman senate prohibited foreign worship, and

(*q*) Isocrat. in Areopag. p. 344. Edit. Basil, 1582.

(*r*) Porph. de Abst. Lib. iv. juxta finem.

(*s*) Athenæus, Lib. xii. p. 547. Edit. Lugd. & 2 Maccab. v. 6.

(*t*) Cyril. adv. Julian. Lib. vi. (*u*) Diog. Laert.

(*w*) Ib. (*x*) Diod. Sic. Lib. iii. cap. vi. p. 546, Edit.

Amstelod. (*y*) Lex Romuli a Balduino edita. (*z*) Romuli Antiq. Lib. viii. cap. vi.

charged

charged the Ediles to see the law executed, which prohibition was renewed in the year 529 (a). In the year 536 the worship of Serapis and Isis was proscribed by the senate; and their temples were demolished by the consuls in consequence of this prohibition (b). Tiberius prohibited the Egyptian and Jewish worship, banished the Jews from Rome and restrained the religion of the Gallic Druids (d); while Claudius (e) employed penal laws to abolish the superstitions even of the native Gauls. The Romans did not spare even men of genius and science; though Voltaire observes that they never persecuted any philosopher for his opinions. Nero, Domitian and even the mild Vespasian banished the philosophers from Rome, confined some of them in the islands and whipt others or put them to death (f). Nor were the Romans tolerant towards the professors of Christianity. Ta-

(a) Livy, Lib. ix. cap. xxx. & Lib. xxv. cap. i.

(b) Val. Max. Lib. iv. (d) Tacit. annal. Lib. ii. cap. lxxxv. Joseph. Antiq. Lib. xviii. cap. iii. & Sueton. in Tiberio, cap. xxxvi. Plin. Hist. Lib. xxx. cap. i.

(e) Suet. in Claudio.

(f) Suet. de clariis Rhetoribus.

CHAP. citus (g) asserts that a vast multitude of  
 IV. Christians, "ingens multitudo," was persecuted in Rome in the reign of Nero; which words were shamefully translated by Voltaire, a few wretches, in order to asperse the religion of the Christians. These and other instances prove the ignorance or unfairness of Voltaire, Hume, Gibbon and others who continually declaimed on the tolerance of the Pagans regardless of truth and historical facts. Voltaire observes, that the massacre of the infants, which is mentioned by St. Matthew, is not taken notice of by Josephus, nor by any Greek or Roman historian; though fourteen thousand children must have perished on that occasion. However the number of children under two years old could not have been so great in a small town like Bethlehem, and in its environs: and if it was, the Greeks and Romans who were accustomed to the murder of infants, would have been little shocked at this crime, especially in the Jews whom they hated and despised. From the silence of Josephus concerning this crime,

(g) Annal. xv. 44.

one

one would rather conclude that it was committed; since if false, he would doubtless have mentioned it. He might have had reasons for his silence, if it was committed; but no reason for suppressing the mention of it, if it was false. Perhaps he was unwilling to provoke the friends of Herod by the relation of it, or to mention an affair which would weaken the credit of a prophecy which he had applied to Vespasian. It was probably for this reason that he was silent about Jesus; as we have already observed in a preceding part of this chapter (r). Nor is the silence of contemporary Pagan historians concerning this murder any argument of its falshood; since Tacitus (s) and Strabo (t), who tell of Herod's dividing his kingdom among his sons, are silent about their names. Tacitus relates some things of the Cæsars, which are not mentioned by Suetonius, and Dio many things, which neither of them tells: why then may we not rely on the account of the Evangelist, though it had not been con-

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IV.

(r) Sect. ii.

(s) Hist. v. 9.

(t) Lib. xvi. p. 765, Edit. Casaub.



CHAP. <sup>IV.</sup> ~~firm~~ed by other historians? We have how-

~~ever~~ the testimony of an Heathen writer who lived near the end of the fourth century, that Herod put to death the boys in Syria under two years of age. Nor did Macrobius borrow his account of the massacre from the Evangelist; since his account differs from that of Scripture in two material points. According to Macrobius (u) the sons of Herod perished among the children, and the massacre extended through the province of Syria; while St. Matthew is silent about the king's sons, and confines the slaughter to one town and its environs. According to Voltaire, all historians except the Evangelists are silent about the star, the darkness and other circumstances of the passion. As to Josephus we are no more to be surpris'd at his silence about these events, than about Christ or the murder of the infants. Nor can we suppose that the Roman historians would pay any attention to prodigies said to have appeared in Judea, which country they despis'd as the seat of folly and superstition. The writings of

(u) Saturn, ii. 4.

Voltaire are ably exposed by the authors of CHAP.  
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the Jewish letters, by Mr. Findlay and by the Abbe Nonotte. The Jewish letters expose his errors, false reasonings, inconsistencies and misrepresentations in several instances; and Mr. Findlay has convicted him of imputing to the Gospel principles repugnant to its letter and spirit, of repeating notorious falsehoods as unquestionable truths, of misinterpreting texts, wresting words to a sense which they could not bear, and of unjustly aspersing christianity and its professors. From the English deists he borrowed several objections, and produced them to the world, as if they were quite new; tho' they had been ably answered in the replies to those deists.

13. Mr. Rousseau was not inferior to any man in vivacity of fancy, or in elegance of expression; but did not employ either of these talents for the good of mankind. He maintained that Christianity, if practised in its purity, would be injurious to society; by detaching men from the world, by disposing them to submit to servitude and by rendering

CHAP. rendering them pusillanimous. The falshood  
<sup>IV.</sup> of these opinions and of his arguments in  
 defending them, proves the feebleness of his  
 judgment; and a comparison of those opi-  
 nions with the following concession, proves  
 his inconsistency and wickedness in employ-  
 ing false arguments against that religion  
 which he allows to be useful(y). He acknow-  
 ledges that "the religion of Christ has  
 "brought morality to greater purity and  
 "perfection than ever it was advanced by  
 "all the philosophers and sages of anti-  
 "quity." If, says he (z) in another part of  
 his work, "all were perfect Christians, in-  
 "dividuals would do their duty, the peo-  
 "ple would be obedient to the laws, the  
 "chiefs just, the magistrates incorrupt, the  
 "soldiers would despise death, and there  
 "would be neither vanity nor luxury in  
 "such a state." Such, according to this wri-  
 ter, would be the happy fruits of the Gos-  
 pel, were all its professors perfect Christi-  
 ans; nor could its most zealous advocates  
 compliment it more highly. As this author

(y) Letter written from a mountain.

(z) Du Contrat Sociale Liv. iv. cap. 8.

has served christianity by his concessions, CHAP.  
IV.  
and done it little injury by his cavils, we pass  
him over without further animadversion.

14. If we consider the false opinions and  
false reasonings of Mr. Gibbon, his perversion, mutilation and mistranslation of authors, the indelicacy and abscenity of his ideas, we shall think our religion rather served than disgraced by his opposition; notwithstanding his extensive knowledge and gaudy stile. This writer ascribes the rapid propagation and success of the Gospel to exclusive zeal, to the belief of a future state, to the claim of miracles, to the practice of rigid virtue among its first converts and to the union and discipline of the christian churches. The first cause to which he ascribes the growth of Christianity was the inflexible and intolerant zeal of its first converts; tho' such zeal was more likely to deter men from the faith than invite them to it. His second cause of its growth was the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments, which induced men to embrace it; in order to obtain eternal happiness and  
to



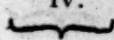
CHAP. to escape the eternal torments threatened by

IV.  
~~~~~

it. But surely men must have believed the Gospel in general, before they believed the doctrine of futurity on its authority ; they must have been Christians before they admitted that doctrine : so that this doctrine could not have been a cause of the propagation of Christianity. According to the Gospel doctrine of futurity, impenitent sinners are thrust into hell, and none admitted into heaven but the good and virtuous ; which doctrine would have been rather a check than an incentive to conversion. Mr. Gibbon thinks the claim to miracles contributed to propagate it ; tho' such a claim if false, was likely to obstruct instead of advancing its progress. He observes that the fathers, in demonstrating the divine origin of the Scriptures, insisted more on the predictions concerning the Messiah, than on the miracles of Christ. The fathers employed each of these arguments in making proselytes : in converting Pagans they appealed to miracles ; but in their controversies with the Jews, to prophecies rather than to miracles, which many Jews ascribed to Beelzebub and
actually

actually rejected though presented to their CHAP.
senses. Mr. Gibbon ascribes the growth of IV.
Christianity to the exemplary virtues of its
first converts, which encouraged others to
join their communion. But he does not
account for the exemplary virtues of the
first converts themselves ; nor for the con-
version of abandoned Pagans to the Gospel
and to virtue. The virtues of the first Chris-
tians arose from their faith, and not their
faith from their virtues. Nothing but a
conviction of its truth could have induced
its first converts to repent and to require
their proselytes to repent as a means of sal-
vation. Mr. Gibbon, who admits the ex-
emplary virtues of the Christians, exhibits
such instances of their weakness as were
more likely to terrify men from the Gospel
than allure them to it ; such as their aver-
sion for musick, gay apparel, magnificent
houses, elegant furniture and for several in-
nocent pleasures and enjoyments of life.
Such acts of austerity and self-denial could
not have encouraged any man to embrace
the Gospel, much less persons in opulent
circumstances. This historian asserts that
the

CHAP. the union, discipline and charities of the

IV.  Christians contributed to propagate the christian system. It is undeniable that union and discipline render a sect respectable, and tend to invite men to join their communion; but it is equally undeniable that the Gospel was propagated tho' perhaps thinly, before its professors were sufficiently numerous to establish a discipline and form themselves into societies. When they encreased, their divisions must have checked its progress; and their rigid discipline was more likely to deter men from their communion than allure them to it. It appears upon the whole, that some of Mr. Gibbon's causes of the propagation of the Gospel obstructed rather than advanced its progress; and that others, which in time might have encreased the number of Christians, did not at first contribute to its propagation. The causes which conspired to disseminate christianity were the miracles of its preachers, the virtues and sufferings of its first converts and the learning of Apoligists. Those miracles prove it to be divine; and the virtues of its converts and their sufferings in its defence are

are incontestible proofs of the sincerity of CHAP.
IV.
their faith. The learning and eloquence of }
the apologists of the Gospel were strong
arguments of its truth and divinity. Men
of erudition, who lived soon after Christ,
had opportunities of examining the foun-
dation of their belief; nor can we suppose
that such men would have adopted a system
not founded on evidence, especially a system
contrary to their principles and prejudices,
and which exposed them to contempt, to
hatred and to severe persecutions. Mr. Gib-
bon is astonished that the sages of Greece
and Rome turned aside from the most aw-
ful spectacle to which the mortal eye has
been a witness from the creation of the
world; namely, the darkness and earth-
quake at the passion. But multitudes of
Heathens did not turn aside from these mi-
racles; but beheld them with reverence and
sacrificed the religion of their education for
that of the Gospel. Mr. Gibbon thinks it
extraordinary that Seneca and the elder
Pliny, who recorded earthquakes, comets,
meteors and eclipses, should omit the pre-
ternatural darkness which happened at the
passion.

CHAP. on. This writer should have known that

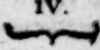
IV.

Seneca does not treat of eclipses, and that his chapter (*w*) on earthquakes, mentioning those only which destroyed cities or their inhabitants, did not necessarily include that which rent the rocks and temple according to the Gospel account. Even Pliny (*y*), who affects to furnish a catalogue of eclipses of an extraordinary kind and unusual duration, omits several; and dwells only on that which followed the murder of Cæsar and during the war with Anthony when the sun appeared pale, almost a whole year. Nor is the silence of Heathen writers concerning the darkness, &c. to be opposed to the positive testimony of the Evangelists and of Tertullian (*z*) who thus expresses himself in his address to the Heathens: “ On the moment of Christ’s death the
“ light departed from the sun, and the land
“ was darkened at noon day; which wonder is related in your own annals, and
“ preserved in your archives to this day.” If the account of this extraordinary darkness

(*w*) Nnt. Quæst. Lib. iv.

(*y*) Hist. Nat. ii. 3.

(*z*) Apolog. cap. xxi.

was not registered, Tertullian would have CHAP.
IV.
exposed both himself and his religion to the  ridicule of their enemies. In the year 290 (a) Lucian the martyr referred the emperor Maximin to the Roman annals, for an account of the darkness; which he would not have done, if he could have been convicted of a falsehood. Besides, it is generally admitted that the darkness extended no further than the land of Judea; so that it might have escaped the notice of the naturalists of Greece and Italy. Had the naturalists of distant countries heard of the darkness in Judea, it is likely that they would have considered it as a natural event, or cried out with the poet "credat Judæus Apella," let the circumcised Jew believe. Had the darkness extended as far as Italy, it could not have appeared singular to the inhabitants who were accustomed to earthquakes, and to darkness for whole days together by the eruptions of burning mountains. Mr. Gibbon represents Pagan worship as consisting of sacrifices, processions, spectacles, feasts, good humour and elegant arts; but omits

(a) Euseb. Hist. Lib. ix. cap. 6. Rufino Interpreter.

those

CHAP. those circumstances which prove it an en-
 IV.

couragement to cruelty, to lust and impurity. The Heathen Gods having been, according to the popular mythology, guilty of adultery, drunkenness, cruelty or impurity; their votaries suited their worship and practice to the notions they formed of them. Gentilism was the parent of cruelty and human sacrifices in Carthage, Phenicia, Germany, Gaul, Britain and other ancient nations, and produced even in the polished states of Greece and Rome several shocking effects. Mr. Gibbon condemns Constantines laws against rapes; and calls a man's seduction of a female under twenty-five, one of the most amiable weaknesses of human nature. Had not his principles and morals been impure, he would have been ashamed to call the seduction of a female an amiable weakness; a crime which is generally attended with poverty, disgrace, impudence, disease and an untimely death. Perhaps he admires Paganism which allowed such amiable weaknesses; but dislikes Christianity which condemns impurity in thought word or deed. He has asserted, that monastic

nastic institutions produced evils which CHAP.
IV.
counterballanced the advantages of the

Christian religion. He could not have exposed his ignorance or disingenuity by such an assertion, had he duly considered the effects of Christianity, or that monasteries produced advantages which made some amends for the evils of them. The first christian monks exercised sobriety, charity and other virtues; and even their degenerate successors sheltered the wretched from oppression, softened the fierceness of Barbarians, instructed youth, were hospitable to strangers and charitable to the poor and transcribed and preserved authors, which otherwise must have perished in times of war and violence.

These and other advantages of monastic institutions compensated in a great degree, if not entirely, for the evils they occasioned.

This author has also ignorantly imputed to Christianity the evils of monastic institutions which owed their rise to an imitation of the Heathens, to false philosophy, to an imperfect knowledge of the Gospel, or to excesses of religion and virtue in some primitive Christians who were extremely austere.

CHAP.
IV.

tere. It is as absurd to ascribe those excesses
 to the Gospel, as to attribute the errors of
 men and the abuses of reason to the rational
 faculty duly cultivated and improved. This
 author, with his usual want of candour, re-
 lates the birth from a virgin and other ex-
 traordinary facts of the new Testament,
 without a single observation on the evi-
 dences ; so that every man who has read his
 history without having examined those evi-
 dences must think strangely of the Gospel
 account. No person of reflection could be-
 lieve those facts, unless the proofs were pro-
 duced : and therefore this writer suppresses
 the proofs, and relates the facts barely ;
 which no rational Christian believes, except
 on the evidences which have been exhibited
 in the second chapter of this work. The
 Evangelists did not urge the miraculous
 birth of Jesus as a proof of his divinity ; but
 believed it, on account of his miracles, and
 other evidences of the truth of the Gospel.
 A man is startled on reading of the miracu-
 lous birth, before those evidences are pro-
 duced ; but on considering the miracles, re-
 surrection, &c. of our Saviour, we believe
 this

this fact as well as those of which the Apostles were ocular witnesses. I know, says Gibbon, but of one religion in which the God and the victim are the same. But surely the Christian religion differs from all others in many other points; no other requires repentance and forgiveness of sins, as conditions of pardon; nor was the author of any other religion the perfect model of every virtue. In other religions animal or human victims were sacrificed; while Christ assumed human nature to satisfy divine justice and to put an end to human sacrifices and to sin, by his own passion and death. "He lived and died," says Gibbon, "for the service of mankind; but the life and death of Socrates had likewise been devoted to the cause of religion and virtue." It must be admitted that these two resembled each other in many points. Each of them went about to enlighten his countrymen and to reform them from vice; each of them chose a state of poverty, and declined posts of honour or emolument; each of them despised the affronts of the wicked; and each of them at last met death with calmness and serenity. However the Greek
T philosopher

CHAP.
IV.

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IV.

philosopher was inferior to Jesus, in respect to the importance of his doctrines and to his manner of delivering them. Socrates often trifled with his hearers instead of informing them, sometimes puzzled them with his subtleties, and in general was more anxious to shew them their ignorance and to confute their opinions, than to establish his own. Instead of clearing up their doubts and opening his whole mind to them, he was constantly asking questions to draw them into difficulties; and often indulged too much his talent for satire and ridicule. His method of reasoning, though convincing to strong minds, was too sophistical for others, and tended rather to confound than to convince his opponents. He publicly acknowledged the Heathen gods, and even worshipped them in private; and his demon used to warn him against dirting his clothes and against other matters too mean for a god to interfere in (a). What has been said may serve to shew that we are not to rely implicitly on this author, who

(a) Plut. de Genio Socratis & Xenoph. Memorab. Defence of Socrates.

judges falsely, reasons falsely, writes indeli-
cately and voluntarily perverts, mutilates and

CHAP.
IV.

mis translates authors in numerous instances
(*b*). A good man would perhaps be silent
about an useful but false system of religion;
unless he could substitute in its room a true
one which was equally useful. What an opi-
nion then are we to form of the writer who
has employed falshood, misrepresentation,
sophistry and ridicule in subverting a reli-
gion which he acknowledges to be a discour-
agement to suicide, to have advanced erudi-
tion, checked oppression, emancipated slaves
and mitigated the ferocity of barbarous na-
tions? The many instances of plagiarism and
wilful error, which have been pointed out in
his history, authorize us to affirm that he
was not an honest man nor a friend to man-
kind. A friend to mankind would not
have laboured to overturn that religion,
which he allowed to be useful; unless he
could substitute some other which was equal-
ly beneficial: nor would an honest and hu-
mane man have employed unfair means to
deprive the wretched and miserable man of

(*b*) See Bishop Watson, Chelsum and Davis against Gibbon.

CHAP. that hope which is his only comfort and
 IV. support under afflictions.

Nor by the
 cavils of
 Mr. Vol-
 ney.

15. The travels (x) of Mr. Volney are an elegant and entertaining work; while the greater part of his *ruins*, though affecting to be learned, is the flimsy offspring of ignorance and fancy. Wanting judgment to discriminate between true and false religions, he rejects them all as false; nor can we be surprized at this instance of his ignorance or want of judgment, when we consider how fantastic he is in other respects. Fancy unrestrained by judgment is a dangerous talent and leads to many errors; and this observation is verified in this chimerical writer, who speaks as confidently of matters which were prior to any authentic history as he could do of present transactions. The sun, planets and the world, he says, were types of God, the deity was originally considered as the sensible and various action of meteors and the elements, then as the combined power of the stars, then as terrestrial objects, and then as the complex power of

(x) Through Syria and Egypt.

nature in her principal operations of pro-^{CHAP.}
duction and destruction, &c. “ Such, says ^{IV.}
“ he (*b*), is the chain of ideas through
“ which the human mind had already ran
“ at a period anterior to the positive recitals
“ of history.” Surely he must have ac-
quired a knowledge of things prior to his-
torical records from fancy and conjecture!
On the same grounds he deduces the Mosaic
account of the creation, of Adam and Eve,
of the origin of evil, &c. from the Chal-
dean theology which, he says, the Jews
learned in Babylon and, on their return
from the captivity, falsely ascribed to Moses
who lived long before it. All the person-
ages from Adam to Abraham he considers
only as mythological beings, stars, constel-
lations, countries; Adam as Bootes, Noah
Osiris, and Nimrod Orion (*d*). Eve’s se-
duction of Adam was taken from Bootes
following the sign Virgo at her setting;
and Eve’s tempting him with fruit from
Virgo holding fruit and giving it to Bootes.
Virgo and Bootes setting, and Perseus rising

(*b*) Volney’s Survey, chap. xxii. sect. viii. p. 277.

(*d*) Ibid. sect. ii. note xxviii.

CHAP. sword in hand and driving them from the
 IV. summer heaven, gave rise to the account of Adam and Eve driven from Paradise, and of a Cherub with a sword placed at the door to guard it (e). However Mr. Volney has not proved the truth of his theory relative to these points; nor refuted the arguments of those who have maintained the book of Genesis to have been written by Moses. But in fact it was impossible to have proved from history, that the Chaldean mythology was emblematic of the solar system; or that the book of Genesis was borrowed from this mythology. The Syrian records are said to have been destroyed by Nabonassar about seven hundred years before Christ; and a respectable historian (f) observes that the antiquities of Syria or Chaldea obtained no great credit, on account of the simplicity and fabulousness of the historians. Berofus the only Chaldean historian of any credit, having written at or soon after the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, which was about 240 years before Christ, had little more than fancy or tradition to furnish ma-

(e) Volney's Survey, sect. viii.

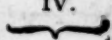
(f) Strabo, lib. i.

terials for his history: so that Mr. Volney CHAP.
IV. had no authority, or what was late and uncertain, for the many thousands of years that he supposes the world older than it is according to the Mosaic account. On the same authority no doubt, he supposes that the book of Genesis was borrowed from the Chaldean mythology and not written by Moses. If this book was not written by Moses, it must have been fabricated by some other person in after times, and ascribed to this law-giver; whereas we have *proved* (g) the impossibility of having forged any part of the writings attributed to him without being detected. Mr. Volney also employs a great deal of chimerical nonsense in attempting to deduce Christianity from the Persian mythology. The Magi having represented the sun at the summer solstice, by the picture of a child suckling a virgin; he imagines that the picture suggested the idea of a virgin bringing forth a child (h). He thinks the Scripture idea of the lamb of God was taken from the symbol of the

(g) Chap. i. sect. 5, of this work.

(h) Volney, chap. xxii. sect. xiii.

CHAP. sun in the sign Aries, his birth from a virgin
 IV. } from the symbol of it in Virgo, and his ob-
 scure state from the cold seasons. Volney maintains that the symbolic theology of Zoroaster or Fo gave rise to Christianity; since his reformed followers the Samaneans ascribed his doctrines to an imaginary person called Christ, worshipped him by this name and called themselves Christians. He derives the names of Christ and Jesus from *Chrif-en* and *Yes* the astrological names of Fo or Bedou, who he says, existed 1027 years before Christ; at a time that neither the Chaldeans nor Persians had any historical monuments that can be depended on. From the similitude between the lives and doctrines of Fo and Christ, he concludes them the same person, and totally denies the existence of the latter. How impudent to oppose his own whims to the positive testimonies even of Pagans and Jews, not one of which ever denied the existence of Christ; though a well-founded denial of his existence would have overturned his religion more effectually than all the calumnies or cavils of its opponents. Mr. Volney objects even to the
 testimony

testimony of Tacitus (*i*) relative to his ex-CHAP.
istence; because this historian borrowed ^{IV.}  what he says of him from the depositions of the Christians before the tribunal at Rome (*k*). But surely Tacitus is silent about any depositions of the Christians, before the Roman tribunal; and if they deposed any thing before a court of judicature, their testimony should have weight with Volney, who considers them as the reformed and austere followers of Fo to whom he ascribes their religion. Since evil spirits work miracles; he asks what is the distinguishing characteristic of those wrought by the divinity? But having *proved* that miracles are wrought only by God or his messengers (*l*), and that the miracles of Moses and Christ differed entirely from the pretended ones of Æsculapius, Vespasian (*m*), &c.; we may justly consider real miracles as one characteristic of the divinity. Each religion, he says, was confirmed by the blood of martyrs who have died for it: but surely it is impossible to name the persons who died in

(*i*) Annal. xv. 44.(*k*) Volney, Note xxxvii.(*l*) Chap. i. sect. vii. of this work.(*m*) lb. ch. iii.

CHAP. attestation of the *facts* on which Paganism

IV.

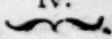
or Mahometanism were founded. Since error has its martyrs, says he, what is the signet of truth? A man may die a martyr to *false* opinions which he believed to be true; but dying in attestation of *facts* in which he could not have been deceived, and the relation of which exposed him to numerous evils is a certain criterion which enables us to distinguish true from false systems of religion. From the various claims of different religions to miracles and to divinity, Mr. Volney concludes that all of them are false; though the numerous errors of mankind in morality or politicks are no proof that truth is no where to be found.

Defects of
the deistical
system
of Paine
and the
French
nation.

16. Mr. Paine (*n*) and the French philosophers reject every religion but that of nature, which they think is obvious to all men. Mr. Paine, though ignorant and superficial in the sciences, thinks himself qualified to acquire a knowledge of the attributes of God from a contemplation of his works. He considers natural philosophy as

(*n*) Age of Reason,

the

the true theology. the starry heavens as the CHAP.
book of science, and the visible creation as ^{IV.} 
the word of God which speaks to all men.
This is the foundation of the theological
system of the French philosophers, the in-
sufficiency of which will appear from the
following observations. I agree with these
men, that the philosophic mind can derive
the chief attributes of God from examin-
ing his works; the anatomist from an in-
spection of the various parts of the human
frame, the astronomer from an examination
of the laws and motions of the heavenly
bodies; and the naturalist from a conside-
ration of the animal and vegetable worlds.
But as every man is not an anatomist, an
astronomer or a naturalist; how is the bulk
of mankind to learn those attributes, with-
out the assistance of revelation? Very few
even of the learned have acuteness to make
the observations of Galen (o), Ray (p) or
Newton; what then is to become of the
peasant or mechanic who is ignorant of the
sciences! Mr. Paine, though a shrewd man,

(o) De usu partium.
creation.

(p) Wisdom of God in the

CHAP. wanted information to deduce the divine

IV.

attributes from the book of the creation.

Though the unity of God is a part of his creed; yet he does not inform us, *how* this attribute is to be learned by strangers to revelation. He talks pompously of deriving ideas of the power, wisdom and goodness of God from the contemplation of the heavenly bodies; but does not shew *how* any one of them is actually derived from it. How false then is the assertion that every man can read the Scripture called the creation? since none do so, but the learned and acute. He admits that religion, considered as a duty incumbent on every man, must be level to the understandings of all: and surely Christianity is so in its moral precepts and worship; while religion derived from the works of the creation is not level to the capacity of one man in 100,000. He thinks it not among the least of the mischiefs done by Christianity, that it has abandoned the original and beautiful system of theology, like a beautiful innocent to reproach and distress. But surely Christianity has not thus abandoned natural religion; since the Scriptures treat sublimely of God in his works,

works; and Christian divines in their dis-
courses, frequently appeal to those works CHAP.
IV.
for the attributes of God. What then are
we to think of the falshood or the audacity
of a writer, who says he does not recollect
in all the writings of the Apostles a single
passage which conveys any idea of what
God is? Surely the single passage of St.
Paul's address to the Athenians (9) admi-
rably describes the nature of the deity:
"Him whom ye ignorantly worship declare
I unto you. God who made the world
and all things therein, the Lord of hea-
ven and of earth, in whom we live and
move and have our being." The best
apology for this and many similar gross fal-
shoods of Mr. Paine, is his avowed igno-
rance of the subject on which he writes;
he informs us he "keeps no bible," and his
whole book proves he scarcely ever read
one: an admirable qualification this for a
reasoner on the truth of the bible! As to
the mischiefs done by Christianity, the au-
thor's history on the contrary points out its
happy effects; and vindicates it from the

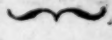
(9) Acts, xvii. 23.

CHAP.
IV.

charge of mischiefs which have been falsely imputed to it by the weak, the ignorant or the designing. Mr. Paine says the Scripture called the creation, reveals to man every thing that is necessary for man to know; though it does not satisfactorily instruct even the philosopher, as to the existence of a future state (which makes a part of Paine's creed) in the mode of worshipping God acceptably, nor in other important points. The idolatrous state of the ancient or modern Pagans shews their inability to deduce the attributes of God from a contemplation of his works; and Mr. Paine might have perceived the nonsense of his theory, had he read the Greek or Latin authors even in *translations*. For the wisest of the Heathen sages visited the temples, and encouraged divination and all the other artifices of statesmen. Socrates (r) used to sacrifice in his own house and in the temples, declared he received counsel from his demon and sacrificed to Æsculapius at the hour of his death. Plato observes (s) that

(r) Xen. Mem. Defence of Socrates.

(s) De Leg. lib. viii. ipso initio

the Delphic oracle ought to direct what CHAP.
IV.
gods the state should worship, and prescribe 
the mode of adoration. Cicero (*t*) affirms
that a wise man should adhere to the sacred
rites of his ancestors; and Epictetus (*w*)
recommends offering up libations, sacrifices
and first fruits after the custom of his coun-
try. Since then the Heathen luminaries did
not oppose but encourage the popular reli-
gion, and conformed themselves to it; we
can have no doubt of the insufficiency of
philosophy to extricate men from supersti-
tion, to prescribe a rational mode of wor-
ship and to enforce its precepts by proper
sanctions. Yet on the strength of his weak
theory Mr. Paine rejects the Scriptures, and
refers men to a book which is infinitely more
obscure and less instructive than they are,
namely the book of the creation. He may
as reasonably recommend his pamphlets to
persons ignorant of the Alphabet, or New-
ton's principles to a stranger to mathe-
matics, as refer those who are ignorant of
natural philosophy and astronomy to the
starry firmament for theological informa-

(*t*) De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. ii. (*w*) Ench. cap. xxi;
tion.

CHAP. tion. The book of the creation is an excellent book, but there are few indeed who understand it; while the bible instructs the peasant as well as the philosopher in theological and moral knowledge. The bible is a moral as well as religious institution; while neither Paine nor any of the French philosophers has shewn, *how* moral precepts are deduced from or connected with their religious system of the creation. Such is the theological system which Mr. Paine and the conceited but shallow philosophers of France would substitute in the room of the Christian religion! Such is the system now admired by their followers in Ireland! Mr. Paine speaks of comparing or confronting the evidences of Christianity with those of his own system; but as he has not done so, the following observations may be acceptable to many readers. It is easier to become a rational Christian than a rational deist; because it is easier to become acquainted with the arguments in support of Christianity, than with those employed in discovering a knowledge of the being and attributes of God. A person of a moderate understanding and little information may
peruse

peruse and *comprehend* the former arguments CHAP.
 in a few hours; whereas it would require IV.
 excellent abilities and the study of some
 years, to acquire such a fund of knowledge
 as would enable men to comprehend the
 arguments whereby the being and attributes
 of God may be discovered *a priori* and *a*
posteriori, from causes and effects. As we
 can not expect that even the teachers of
 youth should all possess such abilities and
 information; how deplorable must be the
 state of any people whose bible is the pla-
 netary system and the works of the creation?
 The Christian instructor, however stupid
 or deficient in divinity, refers his pupils to
 a book which is considered as divine; where-
 as a French tutor, who is dull or ignorant,
 can only refer to the authority of some phi-
 losopher, or to that of the National As-
 sembly every member of which he considers
 as his equal. The ancient philosophers had
 little effect on the manners of men, for
 want of authority; and surely a modern
 French philosopher would have less in-
 fluence than the ancients, on account of
 the principle of *equality* so much insisted
 on in France. The Christian teacher en-

U

forces

CHAP. forces his moral precepts on divine autho-

IV.

— rity; while the French tutor tells his pupils that virtue is *fit*, *beneficial* or *useful* to the republic; or perhaps, that God will reward him in the next world for his good conduct in this. But the arguments usually employed to prove a future state, together with the *fitness*, *beauty* or *expediency* of virtue, are too abstruse for the generality of teachers and of course unfit for the mass of the people. At present the French are acquainted with the divine attributes and moral precepts, from that religion which they abolished: but we may judge of the probable consequences of abolishing it, from the state of the world before it was introduced. The world *then* abounded with oracles, idolaters, astrologers, augurs, soothsayers, &c. &c.; nor can any man tell but a similar group of jugglers may start up, should Christianity be entirely abolished in France. Since then few are capable of comprehending the arguments by which the divine attributes and moral precepts are investigated, and since the philosopher wants authority to enforce either religious or moral duties; how shamefully ignorant, shallow

low or wicked are they, who would subvert CHAP.
IV.
a system which remedied those defects; by
instructing the philosopher as well as the
peasant, in respect both to religious and
moral duties?

17. The enemies of religion have always
pretended to superior wisdom, knowledge
and refinement, affected to instruct man-
kind in matters of moment, pompously
expressed an intention of separating truth
from falsehood, knowledge from ignorance,
the dictates of reason from the fallies of
enthusiasm, of reconciling profound en-
quiry with clearness, and truth with novel-
ty, and of checking enthusiasm and all
kinds of superstition. Had those men di-
rected their powers against enthusiasm and
superstition, they might have been justly
vain of being the friends of mankind. But
as they attacked religion itself, as well as
the excesses of it; they deserve little credit.
The deists are so proud as hardly ever to ac-
knowledge their errors, and so mean and
insincere as to pretend a regard for religion;
while they are undermining it by means
which an honest man would scorn to em-
ploy.

CHAP.

IV.

ploy. Such unfair modes of attack on religion give a despicable idea of the deists, and indeed of their cause. Feeble arguments against religion serve it, in the opinions of all those who have perused the replies; since they prove, that men of abilities would not have employed them, but for want of better arguments. The deists are not only vain and insincere, but hardly any two of them agree together. Some deists will not allow miracles to be proofs of the truth of religion; while others think their evidence irresistible. Some of them represent the Apostles as enthusiasts, others as impostors. By some the first Christians have been charged with embracing the Gospel; in order to partake of the wealth of the Christians: while others accused them of poverty and having no wealth to bestow. If a Jew or a Heathen bear testimony to any Gospel fact, one deist asks why he was not converted; but if he became a convert, another denies his evidence as a prejudiced person: though he sacrificed his prejudices in the act of receiving it.

18. Modern unbelievers, who charge the CHAP.
Christians with superstition and credulity, ^{IV.}
are extremely credulous themselves, and ^{The deists}
believe many things contrary to reason, ^{remark-}
and to the experience of mankind. They ^{ably cre-}
admit that a few illiterate Jews, devoted to ^{dulous.}
external observances and to a national religion, conquered their prejudices, and published an universal religion which was free from the numerous rites and ceremonies of their nation; that they taught religious and moral doctrines, surpassing the wisdom of the wisest Heathens, subdued the power and policy of the Jews and Gentiles, speedily propagated their tenets to many nations; and conquered the pride of learning, the prejudices of religion and the habits of sin, without divine assistance. Deists admit that many persons united in propagating a forgery which produced them no advantage; and that not one of them was prevailed on by promises or threats, to betray the plot, or disown a testimony which exposed them to inconveniencies. A man may endure inconveniencies for his country,

CHAP. try, to obtain wealth or power for himself,
^{IV.} or in defence of a false religion which he
believed to be true; but the deist is unable
to point out an individual who exposed
himself to insult, imprisonment, tortures
or death which produced none of those con-
veniencies. From the creed of a deist it
follows, that impostors were attached to
virtue, and voluntarily endured every evil;
to propagate opinions which were beneficial
to society, but detrimental to themselves:
that bad men reformed the religion and
manners of all nations, or that good men
attempted it by fraud or imposture. They
admit that a few ignorant fishermen were
able to make proselytes in opposition to
power and prejudice, to eloquence and
learning: that crafty men chose for their
hero a crucified malefactor, and suffered
every evil to establish the religion of an
impostor, who deluded them by false pro-
mises if he did not rise from the dead. It
is much easier to believe the facts recorded
in the New Testament, than to suppose
them false, and believe the absurd conse-
quences

quences which must follow from that sup-^{CHAP.}
position. It is more credible that God^{IV.} }
should work a miracle for the establishment
of an useful system of religion, than that
the first Christians should act against every
principle that is natural to men. It is as
contrary to nature that men should prefer
shame, affliction and death, to esteem, com-
fort and life in support of a falsehood, as
that the dead should be raised, or ponde-
rous bodies hang unsupported in the air.
All the mysteries of the Gospel shall be
explained clearly and satisfactorily, when
the unbeliever can shew how these and
other things could have been accomplished
without supernatural assistance. Surely then
little credit is due to those pretenders to
wisdom, who are obliged to admit things
more incredible than what they reject or
disbelieve. Unbelievers generally take up
their notions of religion on shallow and
imperfect enquiries; which fault is some-
times chargeable on men of abilities and
great knowledge in other matters. The
ingenious Halley having once thrown out
some reflections on Christianity, in the pre-
sence of Sir Isaac Newton; this great man
stopped

CHAP. stopped him short by the following words.

IV.

“ Dr. Halley (z), I am always glad to hear
 “ you when you speak about astronomy or
 “ other parts of mathematics, because that
 “ is a subject you have studied and well
 “ understand : but you should not talk of
 “ Christianity ; for you have not studied
 “ it, nor do you know any thing of the
 “ matter.” This reprimand would be well
 deserved by other men of abilities and
 knowledge who asperse Christianity ; tho’
 they never had leisure, nor opportunity
 nor perhaps inclination to examine its evi-
 dences.

Deists
 less wise
 than the
 ancient
 sages.

19. Modern free-thinkers, who would be
 thought to resemble the ancient philosophers
 in wisdom and goodness, will be found
 inferior to them in both these respects. The
 wisest Heathen sages acknowledged their
 own ignorance and the imperfection of
 their faculties ; their pretended successors
 are self-sufficient and disclaim all assistance.
 The former laboured to discover arguments,
 for the comfortable hope of a future state ;

(z) Brit. Biography, life of Emlyn near the end.

the

the latter to erase all apprehensions of it. CHAP.
IV.

The former paid great deference to things sacred; whereas the latter turned every thing serious into jest and ridicule. The Heathen philosophers spared even false religion, for its political benefits; while the modern politician attacks the Gospel which is capable of doing much good, and has actually produced many advantages in every nation which embraced it. It is undeniable that most of the deistical writers possessed some learning, an acute or singular turn of thinking, and generally a lively and animated style; but it is equally undeniable that they wanted qualifications without which an author can not be respectable, namely accuracy, impartiality and a regard to truth and to the good of mankind. The deistical tribe, taken as a body, are a strange composition of wisdom and folly, of knowledge and ignorance, of pride and meanness, of liberality and prejudice, an ornament and a disgrace to human nature, and inferior to the friends of religion in wisdom and goodness.

CHAP.

IV.

Deists less
wise and
respecta-
ble than
the lay
friends of
the Gos-
pel.

20. Having taken a view of the deistical writers, let us turn our eyes towards the great and good men who have been the friends of Christianity. Chancellor Bacon (g), a profound lawyer, possessed the most comprehensive mind, and was serviceable to mankind by directing their thoughts to the works of nature and to facts from scholastic speculations and idle controversies. This writer speaks of religion with respect; and in comparison of him, the greatest of the deists appears shallow and despicable. Lord Chief Justice Hale (h) was profoundly skilled in mathematics, in natural and moral philosophy and in a knowledge of the law; and did honour to the bench by his abilities, his piety and his uprightness. He wrote well on various subjects; and expressly declared that "there is no book like the bible for excellent learning, wisdom and use, and that it is want of understanding in those who think or speak otherwise." Various passages in the life of Lord Mansfield, and the follow-

(g) Brit. Plut.

(h) Ib. and Biog. Brit.

ing one in his will prove that this great CHAP.
luminary in the law was a true believer. IV.

“ When it shall please God to call me to
“ that state, I can carry only the satisfac-
“ tion of my own conscience, and a full
“ reliance on his mercy through Christ.”

At present we have many great lawyers who are friends to religion, and as distinguished by their virtues as by their rank and abilities. Some deference is due to the opinions of clear and well informed minds, accustomed to weigh evidences; and young barristers should guard against exposing their ignorance or weakness by rejecting the opinions of great men; unless they can refute the arguments on which these opinions are founded. Nor was Christianity revered only by eminent lawyers, but by the ablest philosophers that Europe can boast of. Robert Boyle (*i*), who was illustrious by his birth and abilities, by his learning and virtues, condemned the philosophy of Aristotle and Des Cartes, which dealt too much in fancy and conjecture, regardless of facts. He made many useful expe-

(i) Brit. Plut.

CHAP. ^{IV.} *riments in natural philosophy, and always*
 aimed at two points in his writings; namely, truth and the good of mankind. Having entertained doubts about the truth of Christianity; he examined its evidences circumstantially, and appropriated a large annual sum for defending it against its opponents. Mr. Locke (*m*) too was very useful to mankind, by his various writings. He exposed the scholastic philosophy which kept the learned world engaged in perpetual contention, analysed the human mind and explained its operations, traced civil government to its true source, and maintained the reasonableness of religious toleration. Truth was his only object; and his treatises on those subjects contain perhaps more real wisdom and good sense, than all the writings of the deists conjointly. He was complimented as the glory of the last age, and the instructor of the present; and thus praised by Dr. Sydenham the celebrated physician. “If we consider
 “his genius and his penetrating and exact

(*m*) Biog. Brit. & Brit. Plut.

judgment,

“ judgment, or the strictness of his morals, CHAP.
IV.
“ he has scarcely any superior and few
“ equals now living.” He wrote on the
reasonableness of Christianity, and advised
a friend to study the Scriptures, especially
the New Testament. “ It has,” says he
(*n*), “ God for its author, salvation for
“ its end, and truth without any mixture
“ of error for its matter.” A little before
his death he received the sacrament at home
with two of his friends; and declared he
was sincerely at union with the church of
Christ, under whatever name distinguished.
Sir Isaac Newton possessed a vigorous, sub-
tle and penetrating mind; and his works
prove that he justly merited the title of
prince of philosophers. All who attempt
his praise seem to labour for expression;
and a famous mathematician on the conti-
nent thus expressed himself, to an English-
man who visited him. “ Does Mr. New-
“ ton eat or drink, or sleep like other men?
“ I represent him to myself as a celestial
“ being entirely disengaged from matter.”
However his learned researches did not di-

(*n*) Lett. to Mr. King, Aug. 1703.

CHAP. ^{IV.} vert him from religion. There was no book which he studied with more attention than the bible ; nor was there ever any man better qualified than this prince of philosophers, to examine its evidences. But instead of exposing the bible he commented on it, and declared he found more internal marks of authenticity in it than in any profane author (o). Mr. Addison wrote elegantly in Latin and English, in prose and verse ; and his morals were as pure as his style was elegant. He possessed a considerable knowledge of men and books ; and happily employed this knowledge on the side of religion and virtue. His evidences of Christianity are admirable ; and he was so satisfied of its truth, that shortly before his death he exclaimed, “ see in what peace “ a Christian can die (p).” Lord Lyttleton was superior to most writers in integrity and soundness of judgment, and his small tract on the conversion of St. Paul does honour to his understanding and to the cause of Christianity. Many other great

(o) Biog. Brit. & Brit. Plut.

(p) Brit. Plut.

and good laymen (q) have supported Chris-
tianity, in conversation and writing; nor CHAP.
IV.
can there be a doubt, but it is firmly be-
lieved by all wise and good men who have
examined its evidences. The opponents
of Christianity were unquestionably inferior
to its lay friends, in character and abilities.
The former wrote to display their subtlety,
superior knowledge or refinement; the lat-
ter to render men wiser, better or more
useful. Truth does not require any unfair
aids; nor have its friends employed sophis-
try or equivocation, perversion or misre-
presentation of authors, mutilation or mis-
quotation of passages, an affected regard
for the side they opposed, low jests or buf-
foonery, nor other modes constantly em-
ployed by the deists, in support of irreligi-
on. However we do not build our belief
of the truth of the Gospel on the follies of
its enemies, or on the wisdom of its friends;
but on the proofs which have been advanced
in the second chapter of this treatise. The
argument from authority is chiefly intended

(q) Steele, West, Johnson, Bryant, &c. &c.

CHAP. to check the presumption of the ignorant
^{IV.} and weak, and to induce them to examine
those evidences, which had force to con-
vince the acute and judicious.

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I N D E X

I N D E X ^(a).



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